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In the Desert

By

GEORG EBERS

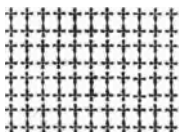
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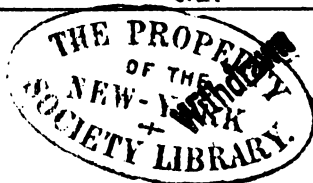


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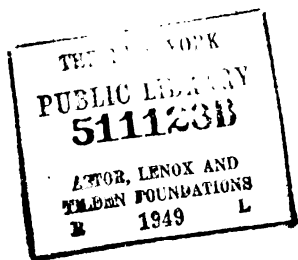
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J.E.



EXF.



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IN THE DESERT

CHAPTER I.

THREE weeks had passed since young Professor Peter Hartwang had mounted a camel, and now, on the Sinai Peninsula, he had at last found traces of the person whom he had gone to meet.

To gain time for this journey to the East, he had closed the winter term earlier than usual, though it was by no means with a light heart, for the surgical department of the great hospital whose head he was could ill dispense with his services. Since its management had been intrusted to his care, he had not left, even for a single week, the great university where he taught. If any one took a serious view of science and professional duty, it was he; yet the claims of the heart also asserted their rights in his broad breast. He had already endeavored more than

once to silence them, but they again made themselves heard only too soon.

He had felt more and more deeply that the happiness of his life would be forfeited if he failed to win back the woman who had been dear to him, even as a child, and who had not only authorized him to believe in her love, but speedily to call her his betrothed bride. Fate had willed otherwise. They had parted in anger, but he believed that she still cherished him in her memory. He at least had not forgotten her a single day, a single hour, and he by no means repented this loyal fidelity; for she was an orphan, and in the cruel time when her parents and her brother, his most intimate friend, had been torn from her, he had vowed to guard her like a precious pledge confided to his care, and never permit her to appeal to him in vain.

If, nevertheless, the bond which had united them was severed, he might attribute the lion's share of the fault to her; yet with greater patience and stronger confidence in the transforming power of love, he might, perhaps, have kept her at his side. In her independence she had turned her back upon her home and undertaken a journey through distant lands; but he had been so

deeply offended that he had let her go like a stranger, without kind wishes or counsel. It had often burdened his conscience as a flagrant violation of duty. A short time before he had heard at the bank which was intrusted with the management of her large fortune that she would return from Mesopotamia to Egypt by land, and another remittance of money was to be sent to Suez the latter part of March. So she must cross Arabia Petræa. He had gone to meet her at once, and inquired at a convent in Sinai, which she had left just before his arrival, what path she had taken. Then he went by a shorter road to wait for her in the Wadi Gurundel, near which hers also passed. Here, in the Elim of the Bible, the Jews of the Exodus, rejoicing in their newly won liberty, were said to have encamped beside "the twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm-trees," gratefully acknowledging the goodness of God, and looking forward hopefully to the new home in the Promised Land. The experience awaiting him at the goal of his wanderings might be similar, yet what a cheerless journeying through the wilderness it would become if he failed to effect a reconciliation with the beloved fugitive!

When he found himself on her track, he had anticipated the meeting with far greater confidence. Now that the dromedary was bearing him nearer and nearer to the place of union, a torturing anxiety took possession of the strong, brave man. He smiled mournfully as he looked after the little gray birds flying toward the water of the oasis. They, too, were obeying a powerful impulse, but no rebuff awaited these enviable creatures at the spring or amid the foliage.

The wells of Gurundel could not be far away—the appearance of the birds proved that.

The Gurundel mountain rose before him as yellow in hue as the beak of a blackbird. It resembled a pile of cushions that had hardened into stone. This singular work of nature might well be a welcome sight to the traveller; for if a storm rose from the neighboring Red Sea, the fury of its attack must burst upon it. Perhaps the task of proving itself a protecting wall would fall to it that very day; for black clouds hung above the blunted pyramid of the Mountain of the Baths of Pharaoh behind him, and dark masses were also gathering in the east above the chain of the Bird Mountains, although the greater portion of the heavens still shone in

radiant azure, and the sun was sinking toward the horizon in dazzling splendor.

He had done well to assent to the dragoman's proposal, and this sheltered spot could not be passed unnoticed by his men, who, as usual, had gone before him with the pack-camels to pitch the tent.

The white linen covering was already glimmering in the valley which opened before him, but it had a companion. Near his modest desert shelter rose another of stately size, and beside it a smaller one, probably intended for the servants, the cook, and the dragoman. Behind it, on a portable fireplace, he saw pots and dishes, and beyond the pool of water, on whose flat shore grew date-trees and green palm saplings, lay forty camels, while six beasts of burden had sufficed to convey his luggage, the tent, and cooking utensils. This desert palace probably belonged to a larger party of travellers or to some gentleman of distinction, perhaps to a pacha! Yet no! The roof of the tent was adorned with no crescent, and the European dress of the woman who had just taken from the open trunk standing out of doors a lady's gray silk wrapper, which she unfolded, forbade the last conjecture.

The meeting between Europeans in the desert usually produces a pleasant impression, akin to the feeling we have at home in seeing a friend. But just now Peter Hartwang would have preferred to be alone. There must be people in the large tent, and it seemed really a misfortune that his meeting with Laura should be observed by witnesses who, perhaps, understood his language.

The busy woman, who now lifted something else from the trunk, appeared to be a servant, and was not even young, but the pretty wrapper on her arm awakened his curiosity. A question addressed to the maid need not build a bridge to the mistress. What if the big tent was pitched for Laura? Suppose it had been sent forward for her, as his was despatched for him? The blood mounted to his brow at this thought. Yet no! Out of five parties of travellers in the desert, four belong to the English-speaking nations, and only British or American tourists usually employed so many beasts of burden. Why should a young girl and her companion need so large a tent? Just at that moment the woman by the trunk, who must have heard his steps, turned, and a joyous premonition hastened his approach;

but she screamed shrilly and dropped the little hand-mirror she had just taken out.

"Traut!" rang in a tone of delight from his bearded lips, but she stretched both hands to him, crying: "Herr Peter—no, Herr Professor, Sir—oh, Sir—here, here in the desert."

Hartwang clasped them with cordial warmth; but the maid quickly withdrew them, the lines in her narrow forehead deepening as if she regretted the hasty act, while her exclamation, "But, Fräulein Laura! What will she say?" expressed timid anxiety.

"What will she say?" Hartwang repeated, a bright smile flitting over his bronzed, manly features. She will exclaim: "'Welcome to the desert, you faithful old friend,' unless the burning breath of Africa has dried up her kind heart."

The maid shook her head thoughtfully as if to save the unexpected arrival from a painful error. But as she seemed to find it difficult to hit upon the right answer, she stooped to pick up the broken glass from the stony ground. In doing so, she thought of the meaning of a shattered mirror and many other things, and, seized with keen anxiety, burst out:

"How glad I was to see you again after so long a time, Herr Peter! But now you appear before one's eyes in the broad, savage foreign land like a stork at Christmas, and instantly—Heaven help us—instantly a misfortune happens! When a mirror breaks—I've experienced it a hundred times—the worst may be expected. It only dropped from my hand to the ground, and—just look here—was shattered into a thousand pieces."

"Let it lie there," said Hartwang soothingly. "True, there are no shops for toilet articles here in the desert, but I have something with me which is as much like the luckless mirror as one egg resembles another; so your young lady need not even once miss the pleasure of seeing the reflection of her dear, lovely face, which brought me after her into the wilderness."

"Oh, dear!" interrupted the maid with the confidence to which, at the age of fifty, her long and faithful service entitled her, "it doesn't belong to Fräulein Laura. The Frau Doctor often uses it. Here, *Ja âle min hene, my boy!*"

This call was to a nimble Bedouin lad, to whom, with the gestures universally understood, and the crumbs of Arabic she had gathered on

the journey, she pointed out the fragments on the ground. The clever boy comprehended perfectly, and while he was picking up the bits of glass, Traut said crossly: "Fräulein Laura hasn't used a mirror for a long time, nor a brooch, nor a watch;" then she hesitated and added in a calmer tone, which sounded troubled rather than accusing: "If the splinters were left lying about, there might be an accident, for she actually doesn't even use shoes any more—never when she is riding. The ground here is so full of stones, yet we can scarcely persuade her to put on slippers."

Hartwang had listened with strained attention. When she paused, he approached her, laid his hand lightly on her arm, and asked in a tone of sincere anxiety: "Then it is really true? She shows, even in her person, her intense dislike of our old Europe."

The maid shrugged her shoulders doubtfully, but the professor looked steadily into her eyes, saying: "Here, where bushes and trees are rare objects, we cannot play hide-and-seek long. Besides, I have little skill in it. Traut, surely you know what Fräulein Laura was to me, and what I hoped. Whatever she may have done, I feel no resentment. If any one in the world

means honestly toward the fatherless, motherless child, it is I, and, Traut, do you deal so with me."

This assurance sounded so sincere, and Peter's handsome, bearded face expressed such genuine depth of feeling while he spoke, that tears filled the gray eyes of Laura's maid, who had known him in his boyhood and been in the service of Laura's mother.

"That's just why I was so terribly startled when the mirror broke," she cried in an excited tone. "How often I've thought of you, Herr Peter; for you are really the only person who could bring the young lady to reason. I've longed for you hundreds of times during this horrible roving to and fro through dust and heat, thirst and the frightful weariness, but most often of all in this last abominable time. You'll see for yourself now! If the child had not grown so firmly into my heart, I'd have been up and away after the long Nile journey, and gone home, just home! And now, Herr Peter, goodness gracious, where haven't we been! Way out into a region, I tell you, where there's nothing at all. She dragged me to the Gazelle River with her and the Frau Doctor. What kind of a woman is she? Do you want to know? A

worthy, sensible person, take her altogether; but, dear me! a widow without a single penny except the money we pay her. Of course, it may be all the same to her where she earns her bread and eats it, provided she doesn't fail to get it. Yet she isn't always on a bed of roses either; for my young mistress doesn't treat her any too kindly; it seems as though there was some quarrel between them. True, Fräulein Laura need not trouble herself much about her; for—even here in the wilderness—she finds great pleasure in many things, which the Frau Doctor doesn't understand as well, especially the plants and stones. That's why she hasn't yet grown tired of wandering about. When it threatens to become so, she finds something that encourages her. But the—oh, Herr Peter! when I'm obliged to see all she does.”

“Well?” asked the professor anxiously.

The maid at first gazed thoughtfully at the ground, but the longing to relieve her burdened heart soon forced her to the confession: “I often think I can't look on any longer. But whom should I trust if not you, Herr Peter, who have loved her from a child? Surely you know her priceless heart. But her whims, her terrible

whims! Always up and off where no one else can follow her. And the strange game which she is playing now. To be forced to look on in silence! My heart often beats so that I think it will hurt me. It's the same with the Frau Doctor; I see that plainly enough; but since the unlucky quarrel, everything runs off from her like water from oil."

"But what can be done here in the desert that is so strange?" asked the professor. "Or are there others in her company?"

"That's as you may take it," replied the maid gravely. "One and another attached himself to her for a short time while we were travelling, but it never lasted long before he was dismissed. It always happened very suddenly. No one could charge her with being untruthful. You had the experience yourself, Herr Peter!"

Hartwang shrugged his shoulders, smiling mournfully, as the maid went on. "But on the Blue Nile, far in the Soudan country, near Khartoum, she allowed an African traveller, a young Hollander, to join us. Not anything like—no, there was no love-making. . . . He had some lung disease, and on the Gazelle River the poor, pleasant young fellow caught the fever.

You ought to have seen Fräulein Laura then, Herr Peter! On her feet day and night, always strong, always wide awake, never weary. But he succumbed to the scorching sun and the hot vapors after the rain. We put the body in a chest, and took it to Alexandria, where it was sent to Holland. It was a gruesome voyage on the Nile boat with the corpse always near. But when she once determines to do anything, nothing can make her change her mind.

Peter Hartwang's cheeks had flushed at this remark. Whatever wrong Laura had done him, she had a noble, generous nature, and he impatiently interrupted the maid with the question whether she would arrive soon.

"Who can tell?" Traut answered. "She really ought to be here now, but since the brown devil has bewitched her—he brings her every little weed and shoots every bird that flies in the air—she often delays a long time. It's enough to drive one crazy sometimes, Herr Peter. Not on account of the food. The cook attends to that well enough. The trouble is somewhere else, and things are beginning to go too far even for the Frau Doctor."

Here Hartwang sharply interrupted her: "The

brown devil! Who is that? And how did this gentleman chance to be here with the young lady?"

"This *gentleman!*" the maid repeated scornfully. "If Faragalla only was one! He's an Arab, a Bedouin sheik, that's all! He went with us from Syria to Palmyra, and then to the Euphrates and Tigris. The young lady wouldn't let him go, so he's still with us, though his presence brings nothing but annoyances."

"There will be a disturbance with the Tawara," observed Hartwang. "They will allow no Syrian to act as guide in their province, and, of course, they furnish the camels, of which I see you use a large number."

"Forty-two—to carry all the plants, stones, and bird-skins," sighed the maid. "No, forty-three, including Achmed, the dragoman's. He's a good, experienced old fellow. It's no mere idle talk when he assures us that we reached here with whole skins by a miracle, especially in crossing that nest of rocks—Petræa."

"Petræa?" cried Hartwang in horror, thinking of the hapless Englishman, Palmer, whom the Bedouins only a few years before had given

the choice between being shot or throwing himself from the cliffs.

"Everybody who heard of the expedition was as startled as you are," said the maid. "The dragoman positively refused to guide us there and then up and down over the heights through the desolate, scorching mountains to Ras Mohammed, the extreme point of the peninsula; but what could he do? The contract required him to take the young lady wherever she desired to go, and Sheik Faragalla never opposed her. If she wanted to visit the infernal regions, he would lead the way. You can't imagine his arrogant conceit. Three or four times there have been violent quarrels between this Sheik Faragalla and the Bedouins. They are certainly a miserable tribe, and the Syrian among them looks like a peacock among geese. You ought to have seen him in the saddle, before he was obliged to give up his dun horse and mount a dromedary. He bewitched Fräulein Laura the very first week by his tricks in horsemanship. And now . . . she can't bear to have him away for half an hour. But there—look—there he comes!"

Hartwang had not needed the exclamation—

he had already seen the rider on the dromedary, who had just stopped before the old dragoman sitting at the door of the smaller tent.

The young professor had met many a stately Bedouin during a former journey through Syria, but this one excelled them all in manly beauty. Hartwang certainly had no reason to regard him with friendly eyes; but he could not help thinking of the fearless heroes who, under the Prophet's banner, had once forced the nations of the East to bow before the crescent.

Sheik Faragalla had scarcely passed his thirtieth year. A kufije of golden yellow silk encircled his head, falling in graceful folds from the cord wound above the brow to confine it, and a burnous of snowy whiteness was worn over the kumbaz, a long caftan made of red and black striped silk. He had just shouted arrogantly to the dragoman, and when the former answered in denial, the Bedouin's nostrils quivered, his strong teeth glittered with a disagreeable expression in contrast to his dark skin, and as the fingers of his right hand clutched his coal-black beard, he looked as if he was holding himself by it to check some deed of violence.

The dragoman, an old Nubian, clad in half-

Arab, half-European costume, gave him no occasion for such an act. After a brief resistance he yielded, with a significant shrug of the shoulders, to the Syrian's will. The latter had informed him of his mistress's wish to go at five o'clock the next morning to the hot springs of the Pharaoh's bath among the mountains. To accomplish this it was necessary, after leaving the tent, to go back over a portion of the way, and old Achmed was a believer in the superstition that to return in travelling never failed to bring misfortune. Besides, the poor sick people in the neighborhood were in the habit of bathing in the sulphur springs, and to obtain an ample space for his mistress among them would be difficult. But on this journey he had so often been compelled to act against his convictions and to do what he considered unreasonable that he would have been foolish to insist upon his own way so shortly before their return to Egypt, where, in addition to his other excellent recommendations, he hoped to receive one also from her hand. Besides, he was not obliged to spare money, and the poor invalids at the hot springs would, perhaps, willingly leave them a short time for the

sake of a few piastres. There were women among them, too, who might be obtained as watchers.

CHAPTER II.

THE dispute between the Bedouin and the Nubian had not lasted long, but it was sufficient to enable Hartwang to form an idea of the character and disposition of the man whose escort Laura was said to value so highly.

Not until Sheik Faragalla had swung himself to the ground without waiting for the dromedary to kneel, and approached him, did Hartwang notice that this son of the desert had already departed in some degree from the customs of his tribe. There was something foppish, theatrical in his walk and bearing, nay, even in the way this Arab wore his long burnous and displayed his weapons, which were newer and handsomer than any he had ever seen in the possession of any other true son of the wilderness.

During Faragalla's altercation with the dragoon, the professor had also learned from Traut that the double-barrelled breech-loader which the

sheik carried on his back, the dagger and sabre which he wore in his gay silk girdle were gifts that Laura had bought for him in the bazaars of Damascus and Mosul.

Sheik Faragalla, while approaching Hartwang, touched his forehead, lips, and breast with a dignity that produced a strange impression in one so young, and the gestures distinctly expressed the Arab's meaning that he placed his mind, words, and heart at the other's disposal. Then the Syrian shouted to the German a greeting, which the latter knew was usually given by one Moslem to another, but not to an alien.

It displeased Hartwang.

One who so readily surrenders the proud distinctions of his tribe, thought the surgeon, can scarcely be an upright man.

This handsome fellow might not lack courage, he might sit his steed like a centaur, he might not even once miss the smallest bird of the air when he fired at it from the saddle with the gun whose possession he owed to a woman, yet Sheik Faragalla was certainly not a man who deserved the confidence or the favor of a German girl.

To feel jealousy of this paid escort would have

seemed an absurdity to Hartwang. The proud young creature whom, even in her childhood, he had treasured in his heart, could not have gone so far astray, but it vexed him that Laura should have given her maid a right to speak of her mistress's relations to this vain fellow in the way she had done.

The professor understood little of Sheik Faragalla's address, but he could not help mentally admitting that the rare melody of his deep voice pleased his musical ear. Yet, perhaps, it was worth while to learn what he had to tell him; so he called his own dragoman, who had just approached, to act as interpreter. But he had scarcely answered the Bedouin's first words of greeting and extremely trivial questions, when two women, mounted on dromedaries and followed by several Tawara men and half a dozen nimble boys of their tribe, appeared in the oasis.

One was a European, a little beyond thirty, with clear-cut features. It must be the widow whom Traut called "the Frau Doctor"—Laura's companion. She wore a costume suited to her age and sex, as she would have done in her German home. Only the broad crêpe veil which fell over her neck and back, and also protected

her cheeks from the scorching sun, would have attracted attention in her own country.

The first glance at the figure of middle height upon the second dromedary would scarcely have ascertained to which sex it belonged. The living creatures that people the desert—lions and camels, jackals and jerboas, gazelles and ibexes—suit its hues of brown yellow or gray, and Laura Vernissen also seemed to wish to adapt herself to these laws. No brighter tint, no gay ribbon or bit of jewelry relieved the plainness of her dress. Had Hartwang met her unexpectedly here in the wilderness, perhaps he might not have recognized her instantly; for her beautiful fair hair had been cut off and now scarcely reached her neck. The clear, delicate coloring of her lovely face had changed to a deeper, brownish tint; she wore on her head one of the light-gray hats used by travellers in India, that look like a fireman's helmet, beneath which a light-brown foulard kerchief fell upon her neck and shoulders. A plain gray silk skirt, confined at the waist by a crocodile-leather belt, extended below her knees, while the lower portion of her body was attired in the full trousers of Oriental women. At the pommel of the saddle, on which

she sat sideways, like most women and many male camel-riders, hung a brown plant-box and several geological hammers of various sizes. She had closed her large nankeen-colored sunshade and was using it to guide the dromedary.

Before the riders appeared from behind the hill, which intercepted the view of the road leading to the oasis, the Bedouin's keen ear had heard the light tread of the approaching animals, and suddenly dropping the conversation so recently begun, he hastened to meet them.

But Laura Vernissen, without bestowing even a glance upon the tents, the people, and animals near them, beckoned to the Syrian with her sunshade as soon as she saw him, calling his name—"Faragalla"—at the same time.

How tender her voice sounded! It seemed as if she was lulling herself in the melody of the vowels, and no one could imagine more enthusiastic devotion than was expressed in the "ja m'allimti," "oh, my mistress," with which the Syrian answered the call.

Hartwang's heart had throbbed anxiously, yet warmly and quickly, at the sight of the woman from whom he had been parted so long; but at this greeting he felt as though a leaden weight

was crushing it, and he clenched his strong hand angrily.

Standing motionless, he waited for what more he was condemned to hear and see.

Laura again called the sheik's name, this time in a questioning tone, adding a few words of Arabic, and the Bedouin instantly knew what she desired. With eager haste he made her dromedary kneel, and then extended his sinewy brown arm to lift his mistress from the saddle. Meanwhile the young girl gazed at the Syrian with an expression of such ardent love in her glowing eyes that Hartwang was obliged to use the utmost self-control to remain a silent spectator.

His other hand had also clenched and his breath came quickly as he watched the sheik swing her over the high pommel of the saddle and place her on her feet.

It was done with strength and skill—nay, even remarkable grace, but the Syrian remained so modestly within the limits prescribed by strict decorum that Hartwang's clenched hand relaxed.

Laura, however, rendered it by no means easy for the sheik to maintain his reserve; for while, with his hand pressed upon his heart, he listened

submissively to what she said to him in tolerably fluent Arabic, her eyes continued to rest upon his face with evident pleasure.

She appeared to be oblivious to everything that surrounded her, and had not vouchsafed even a single glance at any one when Traut, with Laura's slippers in her hand, welcomed her returning mistress to the camp.

Hartwang heard Laura thank her pleasantly, but the warmth with which she greeted the Bedouin had vanished from her voice.

"How will it sound when she sees me?" the German wondered. "Cold as ice, or will the happy hours of the past rise before her memory, at sight of me, as warmly as in bygone days? True, the time is fled when she hastened to meet me with such delightful frankness, so full of vivacity and happy, childlike trust. But it is not too bold to hope for its return."

For one brief moment the pleasant smile with which Laura listened to the maid awakened exquisite memories in Peter Hartwang, and made him forget the long months of grief and anger, as well as the wrathful emotion of the last few minutes. Whatever injury she had inflicted upon him and herself, she was still the Laura

for whose sake he would have sacrificed every one else, and, moreover, the sister of the friend whom he could never forget. Werner Vernissen had long been sleeping beneath the turf. Again, as had so often happened before, the question forced itself upon him—Why had the fate that guides the destinies of mortals so early stricken this young oak, this aspiring, winged mind, with the thunderbolt of death, and forced it to eternal rest before being permitted to place its glorious gifts and its wealth of knowledge at the service of mankind?

How much Laura's bronzed face and the short, fair hair, from which she had just removed the helmet and kerchief made her resemble him! She stood before him like a miniature Werner. His breast heaved with an emotion so passionate and powerful that it almost stifled him, and he pressed his hand upon his heart as the Bedouin had just done. He loved her still, and now approached her; for the sake of her brother's memory, she could not help permitting him to clasp her hand. Laura and he had parted, not on account of facts, but from mere differences of opinion, idle words. True, the gulf had deepened swiftly and surely enough, but now,

after so long a time, perhaps it might be bridged. Life had taught him to accept patiently many things which had formerly seemed unendurable.

And she?

Could so long a journey have remained without making any impression upon her sensitive soul?

How many had attained, in the silent desert, truer knowledge of themselves, new opinions and convictions! He himself, during his first pilgrimage through the wilderness, had understood why tradition sends the great founders of religions—Moses and Zoroaster, Confucius and Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mohammed—into the desert to receive the highest revelations. If only it had also been allotted to Laura to perceive, in this wilderness, that the ideas which she had held before her departure were mere figments of the brain, if memories of her childhood and her mother had led her to the knowledge of what precious possessions she had recklessly cast aside! True, any other woman would have informed him, her best friend, who had been lost for the sake of these things, of this change of feeling.

But she! How resolutely her little mouth

closed now as Traut whispered something that he could not hear.

The expression on her brother's lips that denoted strength of will became on hers obstinate defiance. Her clear-cut face at this moment seemed as if it were cast in bronze, yet she had rarely appeared to him more beautiful. Yes, she resembled her dead brother Werner, but the oval of her face was far more finely moulded; the straight nose, which, as we see in Greek women, joined the clear brow without any break in the line, was more delicately formed. If she would only raise the large blue eyes which he had so often seen sparkling with intellect and animation! . . . But no, he must not wait for that, must not arouse in her mind the suspicion that he was listening to her.

So, forward, no matter how she might receive his greeting.

But there. . . . Confound it! . . . There was the Bedouin standing before her again.

He had advanced with a respectful bow, like a chancellor presenting a pardon for the queen's signature, and handed her the stones and plants collected on the way, which he had taken on his dromedary.

Laura instantly turned from the maid to thank him, but this time she gave the sheik only a hasty glance.

Traut had betrayed that the man whom just now she least desired to meet was near her, and she felt his eyes resting upon her.

She who had gone to the desert to escape observation felt that she was watched, she who for months had been wholly free from constraint found her path and her wishes crossed. Perhaps she might even find herself compelled, from fear of another's opinion, to draw back from or at least to defer an act which she confidently believed would yield the happiness for which hitherto she had vainly longed.

It seemed humiliating that she had withheld the look of gratitude which was his due from the free son of the desert, as she called Faragalla, the man she loved and to whom she was also dear how dear would be decided speedily enough—merely out of consideration for another from whom she had parted because they could not understand each other in any way. She would have liked to stamp her foot angrily like a child. She refrained from doing this, but resolved that she would not have her liberty

restricted in any other respect. She had turned her back upon her native land that she might live in accordance with the claims of her nature, and no one, whoever he might be, should interfere. Her heart yearned for happiness. Whatever joys she had had in the past possessed no greater value than the skins of the grapes whose pulp had been eaten. Nothing but the vivid life of the present could offer her genuine bliss, and the man whom she shrunk from meeting belonged to that vanished time which she had buried, and whose resurrection could only diminish the liberty she had gained. Whatever happy moments it had contained, it was now repugnant to her to be reminded of them. He must learn this.

She had not yet seen Hartwang, but she knew where to look for him. Drawing herself up to her full height, she turned toward him. But before she had time to speak, her own name eagerly escaped his lips.

How tender and sincere it sounded! It was years since she had heard it uttered in that way by any one. Perhaps that was why the impression made was so deep, so strange. Her heart had never throbbed so quickly at the softest "ja

m'allimti" from Faragalla. And the man who now approached her came like the embodiment of home and all the dearest things that she had left there. At the sight of him all that had disturbed and angered her was forgotten. For a moment, too, the image of the dead brother whom she had loved so dearly rose before her.

Tears dimmed old Traut's eyes as she saw her young mistress permit Hartwang to clasp her hand, while she asked somewhat shyly, but not unkindly, whence he came, calling him Peter, as he called her Laura. Oh, and now she was even inviting him to share her meal! Of course he accepted. At first everything went on splendidly, for Laura had read no newspapers recently and received nothing but uninteresting letters from the banker.

Traut, as usual, served the dishes—soup, roast meat, and fruit. The companion enjoyed the dinner, but Peter and Laura ate very little. At first the maid had every reason to rejoice, but at dessert lines of anxiety furrowed her forehead. Again the professor had not understood how to "take" the girl. Why, when he had barely secured her toleration, did he say that he thought he had come just at the right time to

protect her from misinterpretation and even from herself? If, at least, he had only forbore to question her at once about Sheik Faragalla! He had actually done that, and asked if his fear that "this fellow" might abuse the kindness with which she treated him in return for his useful services was wholly groundless.

"I only wish it was in my power to make him some better acknowledgment," she had answered sharply.

Then, without waiting for the dessert, she had risen, and with a passing allusion to the heat, which Hartwang also found very oppressive, she went out of doors, where the dragoman had placed a rocking-chair for her.

Deeply dissatisfied with himself, the young professor approached the girl. He ought to have known her better, and now tried, by gently leading the conversation into another channel, to make amends for his error, but her manner showed that for the present the game was lost.

Leaning far back in the chair, she gazed into vacancy; but he talked on until she abruptly interrupted him with an invitation to light a cigar, as he probably had not ceased to be a smoker. It would occupy him, while she liked,

after dinner, to devote herself to her thoughts. He obeyed, and as the companion offered him a light, he talked with her on indifferent subjects.

Occasionally he glanced across at Laura, but he found that it was not yet time to speak to her again; when she compressed her lips so closely, intense anger ruled her soul.

In fact, she was now reproaching herself. How had she permitted a weakness long since conquered to gain such power over her? Fool that she was! Might she not have perceived, without his frank statement, what Peter wanted from her?

The old story!

He desired, as if she were still a mere child, to protect her from herself and induce her to conduct herself in such a manner that the society to which she had said "valet," because it was distasteful to her, might applaud her.

He wished to draw her back into the old ruts from which she had released herself by her own strength.

But Peter should find himself mistaken,
Peter!

What a name!

When she saw him again just now he had seemed like one of the oaks of her native land—rough, but unyielding in firmness, and bestowing grateful shade with its broad, dense crown of foliage. Now, after he had offended her, and then eagerly, yet not without embarrassment, tried to convince her that he owed their meeting here to a lucky accident, his thick, golden hair and beard and round face reminded her of the sunflowers in the peasants' gardens, which had formerly pleased her eyes. He had not even retained the manly firmness of former days; he would have disdained to use such tricks of speech at home.

Sheik Faragalla was now standing near, waiting, leaning on his gun, for her orders, as he did daily after dinner. She had forgotten him too long for the sake of another.

But she would atone for this injustice. True, she must impose some restraint upon herself so long as Peter remained here. The sooner this meeting with him was over, the better. His presence lessened her consciousness of independence and clouded the peace won by so hard a

struggle. What could their reunion cause save perplexity, misunderstanding, and strife?

Besides, she found the heat unbearable. Beyond the oasis, where neither hills, bushes, nor trees obstructed the free sweep of the evening breeze, it must be cooler.

A call, and the dragoman hastened forward. Laura meant to tell him to have the tent taken down at once, but as her glance wandered to the man who had once been dear to her, she felt that she was in the act of wronging him, and her cheeks flushed. Another reminder of the old, fettered life which she thought she had cast off! Had she cause to be ashamed of the gain she had made not only in external, but in complete mental independence? Unworthy scruple! He should learn that a woman who is in earnest can secure for herself the best possessions of man. So, in a curt, resolute tone, she commanded Achmed to strike the tents and put them up again an hour's journey northward.

The gray-bearded Nubian shook his head thoughtfully, but Laura did not heed it, and repeated her decision to Hartwang. This was not easy, yet her voice betrayed no sign of her

secret agitation as she added soothingly: "You can tell our friends at home of our strange meeting in the desert. Welcome as it was to me, I think it teaches us both that whatever change has occurred will hardly promote the harmony which, even in former days, we could only maintain with great difficulty in daily intercourse. If I see clearly, we ought to say, as did Abraham and Lot, perhaps on this very spot: 'If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.'"

Forcing a smile, she held out her hand as she spoke, and Hartwang clasped it; but his voice sounded hoarse as he answered curtly: "As you choose, yet however annoying my presence may be, reason or the instinct of self-preservation should induce you to bear it at least until to-morrow morning."

Laura's quick blood boiled again, and with the utmost positiveness she ordered the dragoon to obey her commands at once.

But the old man, with sincere anxiety, pointed to the black clouds gathering in denser masses in the east and south. A thunder-storm would certainly burst upon them during the night, and

until they reached the Fountain of Moses, two days' journey distant, there was no camping-place that would afford nearly so good a shelter from storm and tempest as this one.

Frau Helene, the travelling companion, now spoke earnestly, entreating Laura to listen to the Nubian's warning. When, nevertheless, the girl persisted in having her own way, the widow reminded her of the bath she wanted to take in the hot springs early the next morning.

"You shan't lose it," Laura answered in English; for, on account of the dragoman, Frau Helene had used that language. "We have time enough, and—a good idea! Instead of going northward, we'll turn back early in the morning to the south of the Mountain of the Baths of Pharaoh. Then we can step directly from the tent into the springs. I cannot and will not stay here in this lodging-house for everybody"—she glanced around the oasis, and her eyes rested on Hartwang as she spoke. "Just look there! Sardine-boxes, orange-skins, scraps of newspaper, and patches of ground blackened by fires everywhere. Brr-r! I did not go to the desert to enjoy such traces of European civilization. Will you be ready soon, Achmed? I have com-

manded. We can go back to the Mountain of the Baths of Pharaoh for aught I care."

"Anything but that," cried the dragoman. "You do not know what vagabonds frequent it. I would rather go northward. But that too. . . . If any evil befalls you, all the blame will rest on old Achmed, and only Allah's mercy—you know it yourself—has hitherto saved you from harm and destruction. If I yield again, and the storm bursts upon us while we are encamped in a place exposed to its fury . . ."

"Then it will tear down our desert-house," interrupted Laura. "It will not be the first time such accidents have happened to you or to me. We have always managed to come out alive from the canvas and tent-poles. Take down the tent, I say, and saddle the dromedaries at once!"

But the dragoman still hesitated, and Traut now attempted to raise a warning voice in his place; Laura, however, angrily silenced her and told her to pack the luggage.

Then the old Moslem raised his hands, pressed them on his white turban, and uttered broken words of lamentation: "If you should refuse, on account of breach of contract, to pay me—you

were to be taken to Suez—I cannot obey your order to depart.”

Laura fixed her eyes thoughtfully on the ground. If this Oriental risked his wages, the danger which he anticipated could not be a trivial one.

Meanwhile, Hartwang had consulted his own dragoman, and heard the Nubian's fears vigorously confirmed.

“Then the storm will tear down our desert-house,” were the last words that he had heard from Laura's lips. He must guard her from the threatening danger and the consequences of her defiant obstinacy, which—he was well aware—was increased by his presence, and this time neither voice nor bearing lacked manly decision as he cried: “You must stay, Laura. It is not courage, but sacrilege, to battle with the powers of Nature.”

And, turning to the Nubian, he said, also in English: “You are right, Achmed. The young lady has changed her mind and will go no farther to-night.”

With these words he was moving toward his tent, but he heard her call imperatively: “The

gentleman misunderstood me. We will set out as soon as possible."

"Laura!" he interposed warningly, but she did not hear him, and her wounded self-consciousness made her entirely forget what the man to whom she wished to show her superior power had once been to her, how much she owed him, and what sincere friendship influenced him; for with rude decision she called to him with flashing eyes, again using the German language: "I, I, I, and I alone am the ruler of these tents, these animals and servants, and I, *I* desire to leave here at once, even, if necessary, in the midst of a thunderstorm. For I would far rather be struck by lightning and killed by the falling tent than to yield again the liberty gained by so much toil, no matter to whom it might be. Though fire and sulphur should rain from heaven, we will ride on!"

With these words she turned from him, beckoned to Faragalla, and in a tone of entreaty urged him to see that the caravan with the tents followed her as quickly as possible, and that the dromedaries were led up at once. The Bedouin bowed, saying deferentially: "My mistress's wish points the way, to her slave."

Then he went toward the tents, followed by the Nubian, and tokens of the approaching departure soon appeared.

He had again been forced to act against his convictions, but to enter into a dangerous conflict, so near the end of the journey, with the arrogant, hot-blooded Bedouin, who, under all circumstances, was sure of his mistress's approval, would be too greatly to his disadvantage. "The cool blood of age," he said to his younger companion and countryman, "ceases to rush into its own hurt, to maintain its will against the impetuous recklessness of youth. He who is condemned to serve a fool must warn him; but if the fool's command forces him, nevertheless, to lead him to destruction, Allah, in his goodness, imputes to his servant's obedience a merit. Whatever the result of the step may be, I did my duty."

CHAPTER III.

LAURA had gone back into the tent, where Traut, muttering angrily, was taking an umbrella and waterproof cloak from the luggage. The girl no longer felt pleasure in having had her own way—nay, she began to be troubled because she had rebuffed Peter's interference so rudely and defiantly—perhaps wounded him. Why could she no longer succeed in regarding the man whom she had once loved, and at whose side she had hoped to be happy, as a good old friend? He had surely considered himself one when he ventured to thwart her will. Ventured? Yet he could scarcely be justly denied some right to warn her. Had he not for years been part of the trio whose other members were herself and her brother Werner, now no more? That brother in his dying hours had expected that his friend would fill his place. And what had happened between them at home and now again here! The

last offence, at least, she would gladly have undone, but it was no longer possible to recall her orders and remain in the oasis.

Under the direction of the Bedouin and the dragoman, the tent had already been taken down. How shrill and imperious Faragalla's voice sounded to-day! Peter's—she could not deny it—even in angry excitement, was gentler, more musical. But how ungrateful it was when the sheik, merely to render her obedience—and certainly against his own better judgment—was forcing the dragoman and all the rest to carry out her will alone, to reproach him for compelling his opponents, with trumpet blasts, to yield to him! Oh, he had totally different accents at command when he called her his mistress and confessed that, if he possessed a thousand lives, it would make him happy to expend them to the last one for her and in her service. Never had she heard from Peter's lips such heart-enthraling outbursts of feeling from a soul glowing with ardent passion. She had heard an Arab hero praised as a lion, rending in battle, caressing in love, but always a lion, and such a man was Faragalla! There was no room for lofty surges of emotion in the breast of a Hartwang, fettered

by prejudices of every kind! The only thing she desired from him was that he would let her go without resentment, if possible, with a kind word and clasp of the hand.

As soon as Laura left the tent, the Tawara drew the pegs from the ground and loosened the ropes. Peter was standing beside his dromedary. Those to be ridden by the women were also saddled.

The girl went up to her old friend and, trying to hide her embarrassment under a smile, entreated him to remember her more kindly than she perhaps deserved, and for once endeavor to comprehend a nature to which what seemed to him black appeared white. While, not wholly without bitterness, he assured her that he had already frequently made the attempt and with excellent success, she noticed that his tent had also been taken down, and that he was in the act of mounting his dromedary. This was contrary to her desire to get rid of him. Now that she had in mind plans that would certainly incense and perhaps wound him, she must try to banish him from her companionship, and in a wholly altered tone she said: "I am leaving—I will not deny it—in order to be alone, and brave the

storm for that purpose, yet it seems as if you intended to accompany me."

"Certainly," Hartwang answered calmly. "Your eulogy of life in the desert fell upon fruitful soil. I am only using your much-vaunted liberty. Nothing, my friend, shall prevent my choosing the way that pleases me."

"Unless it is mine," she burst forth angrily; but she quickly succeeded in controlling herself, and in a quieter tone added: "So I will beg you to give my regards to any friends at home who still remember me. Here, on the soil of old Asia, I will now say farewell to you for the last time."

Then she turned to the Bedouin and called in Arabic: "Let us go now, Sheik Faragalla!"

The sun was almost setting.

Laura had already ridden northward for nearly half an hour, but without exchanging a single word with her travelling companion. Faragalla, with the sheik of the Tawara, and the boys of the tribe who followed them, kept modestly behind her. Traut was to follow with the dragoon and the baggage.

She had often journeyed for hours, thinking and dreaming freely, undisturbed, without feeling the necessity of uttering a word. To-day she

was oppressed. She attributed it to the sultry air, which did not grow cooler, as usual, shortly before sunset. She felt a desire, too, to watch the clouds in the south and to look behind for those who were following. Perhaps the dragoon had made them anxious unnecessarily. True, the southern sky was intensely black, the east looked threatening, and some dark clouds were already rising from the west; but the sun still floated radiant and unveiled in the azure heavens just over the African mountains bordering the Red Sea.

“As soon as we find a suitable spot we will encamp,” she called to her companion; then, looking up at the sun, said positively: “Quarter of seven o’clock.”

“Twelve minutes after half-past six,” said Frau Helene, confirming the statement and slipping the little watch which she had consulted back into her belt. “It is wonderful, *Fräulein*, how exactly you can ascertain the time by the position of the heavenly bodies!”

“At least, I am no longer dependent on watches and watch-makers,” replied Laura in a tone of self-satisfaction. “The wiseacres told me that I ought to take my father’s chronometer

with me, but I left it at home, and found myself perfectly comfortable, as I always do when I follow my own ideas in spite of them. Watches are like most of the acquisitions of our far-famed civilization. To every one who succeeds in drawing nearer to Nature they are troublesome ballast. How much annoyance and anxiety the one order not to trouble me with letters and papers during my journey has spared me! If I had been told a few weeks ago of the meeting with Hartwang . . .”

“He seems to be an agreeable and, at the same time, a talented man—a man of character.”

“Searcher of souls,” retorted the girl, shrugging her shoulders.

Then, turning to Faragalla, she pointed to some rising ground at a considerable distance, and told him to have the tents pitched there.

“You anticipate my thoughts, Mistress,” replied the Bedouin, uttering a strange, gurgling cry, and dashing back toward the south so swiftly that Laura watched him in astonishment. His clumsy dromedary darted off over the level ground with its rider like a stag. She had formerly ridden the same animal, and could urge it to no faster pace than a moderate trot.

"Both children of the desert," she remarked, directing Frau Helene's attention to the dashing figure, "and how they understand each other!"

"A remarkable sight, certainly," replied the companion. "I admit his zealous service . . ."

"But nothing more," interrupted the other irritably. "That one thing, however, is certainly no trivial merit. To please me, he would bring Satan himself from Hades."

"There might soon be plenty for him to do on earth," replied the companion bitterly; but Laura, without heeding the words, charmed by the wonderful scene opening before them, cried: "What an exquisite picture! Behind us the black storm-clouds and before us the brightest sunset sky!"

"A beautiful symbol—perhaps prophetic of your life, dear Fräulein," the widow answered.

"Rather of yours," replied the girl. "As for me, the sky above my head was never a brighter blue than in the freedom of this glorious journey through the desert, which I do not intend to have clouded either by a meeting with a member of the society I have abandoned or by a morose companion." She rode on in advance of the widow as she spoke,

They continued their way in silence,

Doubtless Laura sometimes wished to direct Frau Helene's attention to the brilliant spectacle before them, but the latter's answers had angered her too deeply. How often her dearest convictions, her best thoughts, had been diverted by this woman, to whom she would gladly have been more friendly, whose intellect and knowledge she prized! But no confidential intercourse with her was possible. Their paths had parted long ago, and doubtless it was for the best.

"When anything touches my heart like this sunset, what do I care for another person's approval?" she asked herself. "One might more easily endure the 'bravo' of the congregation, after a sermon in church that stirs the very soul, than tolerate in the presence of such a spectacle a rapturous 'wonderful' and 'unique.' True, I should not have expected such insipidity from this intelligent woman; but I must not hope to share with her the feelings awakened by any warm emotion."

Again, as she had frequently done before, Laura asked herself if she had not erred in making Frau Helene her travelling companion. She had done so because she did not need to pay her

any special attention, and even in her presence, which she often needed, could feel herself alone. But she had been disappointed in her and found much that she had not expected. Her clever, sensible opposition could not be dismissed with a curt "enough," and they agreed in few serious questions. What was left for her to do except to keep more aloof from her companion than she had intended, in order not to have the charm of solitude entirely destroyed. Recently she had depended entirely upon herself, and, with no mental communion with Frau Helene, had felt especially comfortable and experienced hours when she realized that she was entering into Nature and becoming one with her. Then Peter had arrived to show her that man, even when he has uprooted himself from his native soil and believes he has placed himself in an entirely different sphere, cannot wholly free himself from the world in which he grew to maturity. Invisible threads that he believed he had severed still hold firmly, newly won rights are rendered doubtful, while others, which had been definitely given up, assert themselves afresh, with a renewed tendency to deduce duties from them. She had believed herself a free agent, the independent

mistress of her own fate, and Peter's appearance had showed her that she was not.

"What causes the world," she asked herself, "to strive so eagerly to hamper those who have turned their backs upon it and desire to live and be happy in a way which has nothing to do with it? If the fugitive has succeeded in this so well that he has nothing further to desire, the world would strive to destroy this happiness by imprinting on it the brand of guilt, and thereby giving it a repulsive aspect. It seems as if every one who turned his back upon society was pursued and punished as a deserter, though he had never owed allegiance to it.

But a few hours ago she had believed that she had succeeded in regarding all these things with contempt. Now she felt as if she had only hidden her eyes, like the ostrich, and if she raised her lids would see everything of which she was accused plainly enough. How this confession would please Peter, how he would play it off against her as a proof of the correctness of his antiquated opinions! But she felt strong in her own might, and would show herself and him that she had attained the mental freedom which he knew hovered before her as the highest goal of

life. Could she not close her ears with the wax of Odysseus against the world's sentence of condemnation, disregard it, scorn it? If he was bold enough to follow her, she would to-morrow, yes, she certainly would—a sudden wave of color crimsoned her face at the thought—put an end to the hesitation of the last few weeks and convert into a fact what had been merely a thought difficult to silence, perhaps only an illusion of the senses. Besides, that which she so often, so passionately desired must be a need of her own nature, and therefore right—if such a word could be considered at all by a superior being who had the courage to place himself outside the realm of good and evil. The image of the virile beauty of the son of the desert, who clung to her with passionate devotion, whose heart overflowed whenever he addressed her, on whom she could bestow happiness by a single gracious glance, rose before her soul in vivid outlines, and with it the vision of a ruined citadel on the steep, rocky declivity of Mt. Lebanon, with a pine wood at one side. The sight of it a few months before had awakened a wish to buy it, have a house built, and live there with Faragalla like a pair of free eagles in their mountain eyrie, accompany

him on falcon hunts, and, under his strong guard, lead a life of delicious independence in ardent love. While recalling these memories, her eyes rested rapturously upon the mountains towering in the west beyond the sea.

While in her own breast varying feelings and wishes, fears and demands from the vanished past were contending with one another, invisible combatants yonder had been fighting a tremendous battle.

Above the heights whose base was washed by the sea, light and dark crimson hues flowed like streams of blood, and the rays of the setting sun flashed like golden arrows over the mountain peaks, which rose glittering above it in sloping and perpendicular cliffs. The sea, which at noon had sparkled with the green of the emerald, now showed in the north the deep blue of the gentian flowers, farther south, where it served as a mirror of the thunder-clouds, a gloomy black, broken here and there by flakes of white foam. Then the crimson vanished from the ridges, whose rocks changed their hue to the reddish-blue tint of the violet. Wherever their outlines were relieved against the azure of the sky, a glimmering golden streak surrounded them; then

dark veils descended, shrouding their forms from the eye; but in the south dazzling flashes of lightning, followed by no thunder, frequently burst through the raven blackness of the clouds.

Frau Helene had called these appearances in the heavens a symbol. Perhaps she was not wrong. Had not Laura's life long resembled formless clouds, massed together haphazard, and only occasionally pierced by a sudden flash of light that speedily vanished? In her childhood, and the early years of her girlhood which followed, it had indeed been flooded with brilliant sunshine; but how soon fate had extinguished it! Yet even now, scarcely beyond her twenty-second year, she was still young, and her whole soul longed for happiness, a happiness which she hoped to find in a union with Faragalla. What if it did prove fleeting! When it disappeared she was free to turn her back on life. To depart from the world when he chooses is a right in which the mortal possesses an advantage over the immortal gods. To be the next moment in Paradise is not too dearly purchased at the cost of death—she could find it in Faragalla's arms; and she would obey the impulse of her nature and enjoy it, in spite of Hartwang and the whole

superannuated old world at home. What mattered it to her if, in doing so, she perished like the moth that is consumed by the flame to which its whole being attracted it?

By giving herself to Faragalla, she would bid farewell forever to the society to which she belonged by birth, not by her own free choice or inclination. Let it pronounce its verdict upon her. She would accept it. The matter was decided. But while she was reflecting upon this decision, Peter's image unexpectedly rose warningly before her, and at the same time she remembered his words—that his life would be occupied in warfare against two foes: the name of one was Pain; that of the other, Death!

When Laura's brother was thrown from his horse, the family physician had said that death was certain. But her father had sent for the most famous surgeon in Cologne, and as he was absent on a journey, his first assistant, Peter, the patient's most intimate friend, came in his place. When she asked him, beside her brother's sick-bed, if he, too, believed Werner's case hopeless, he answered passionately: "I shall hope until his heart ceases to beat." Then he went to work, and with what caution and calmness, what marvellous skill!

She was scarcely beyond childhood at that time, yet the indescribable emotion began to stir within her heart which she had been inclined to call love until she perceived her error. Fire and water might have formed a harmonious union sooner than his and her own views of the world, convictions, and opinions. How few impulses of the mind and soul had not encountered opposition from Hartwang! He was the personification of the old time, she of the new, which struggled to win and held fast the very newest ideas.

But Faragalla?

What he offered her was outside of time and its changing spirit. He belonged to the category of the eternal, and was love incarnate, great, self-forgetful, sacrificing love. She had fled from the society to which she belonged into the desert to live out her own life, listen to the demands imposed by her own nature, and afford them satisfaction. Now she knew what her nature required, and it was her right to satisfy it. She would respect it.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Laura, absorbed in these varying thoughts and emotions, had given herself up to the impression produced by the setting sun, the dromedary plodded along with a slow, steady step. Now the last tints in the western horizon faded, and she knew how quickly in these latitudes twilight passes into night. Instead of growing cooler, the air had become more sultry. The black cloud-bank behind her, through which dazzling shafts of light darted noiselessly from time to time, was spreading farther over the blackish-blue vault of the sky. A dark night, illumined by neither moon nor stars, was closing in. The thunder-storm could hardly fail to burst upon them. Close beside the road was a low hill. Laura did not know whether it was the one which she had pointed out to Faragalla; but the tents must be erected here, if her men were to profit by the dim light which still came from the unclouded northern portion of the sky.

So she stopped her dromedary, requested Frau Helene to do the same, and called one of the Tawara boys who were following her. He was to help her dismount by making the dromedary kneel. If Faragalla were only here! Every creature of the desert obeyed him at a mere sign; and when he held out his arms it was a pleasure to descend from the high saddle. She involuntarily looked around for him, and . . .” He was just swinging himself from his dromedary close beside her. It seemed like a miracle—but that was always his way. He anticipated her wishes, and they were fulfilled before she uttered them. Between Faragalla and herself existed the bond—whose origin science was now tracing—of that strange power by which, even at a distance, one person influences another’s will. She had already often told herself that his power of divining everything she desired put to shame the old saying that the human imagination possesses nothing which is not brought to it through the senses; for Faragalla knew what she wished, even when he had not communicated with her by word or glance.

Never had she assured him of her gratitude more tenderly, more warmly than in the exclaima-

tion, "I thank you, my friend!" after he had lifted her from the saddle. Her head, too, as she descended, had rested a moment on his breast, and he must have felt how her whole being, which was doubtless beginning to yield to the hypnotic power that emanated from him, struggled against it, yet in his reverence for her, his goddess, he had not drawn her even a finger's breadth nearer to him than he was in the habit of doing in the bright sunshine, in the presence of the whole company of travellers. She would reward him for it.

Laura looked up at him with deep emotion. The darkness was not yet too great to prevent her seeing that he was pressing his right hand upon his heart. Obeying a sudden impulse, she laid her white fingers on the Bedouin's sinewy brown ones and asked: "Will it grieve you to part from me, Faragalla?"

"Oh, mistress," he sighed softly. Then, kissing the sleeve of her dress, he added in a tone of sorrowful reproach, which sounded like the outcry of a wounded heart glowing with passionate emotion: "Can you doubt it? What is the moment called in which Faragalla has not showed you that the earth holds nothing for him

except you, so long as he is permitted to serve you?"

"How should I be able to name it, since it has not yet appeared?" she answered joyously. "And yet, my friend, all things here below, even the most beautiful, come to an end, and when the time arrives that I must say: 'To-day our paths part . . .?'"

"I will cry out that it is a dark one," he passionately exclaimed.

Then, suddenly changing his tone, he again kissed her garment, and in a half-beseeching, half-accusing voice, added: "But it rests with you, my mistress, to defer the end of the journey a long, long time. Is it not beautiful in the desert? Do I not watch over you like a mother's eye? Have I not proved myself strong enough to hold danger and evil far from you? And you will find me everywhere the same that I have been in this country, where I was forced to give up my horse and every man is my foe; for, mistress, my life is solely to be with you and serve you."

"Life, life," cried Laura joyously. "You shall have exactly that for my happiness and your own!"

But here she was suddenly interrupted by the dragoman, who had followed the sheik as fast as he could, and now asked in what place she wished to have the tent pitched.

"I thought it was your business to find a spot to encamp, not mine," she answered irritably. But the Nubian shook his head, saying: "I followed the sheik as fast as I could, in order to look around us before the darkness made us blind; but the night came before me. Yonder hill cannot shelter us, for it rises on the east of the road, and the storm from the south will break upon us, while another is coming from the sea; and beyond the hill which might protect us, if we encamped upon the side that is farthest from the road, there are piles of stones. It would be impossible to put up a tent among them even by daylight."

"But it is night now," the young lady impatiently interrupted, "and the dragoman whom Allah approves values his own counsel higher than a woman's."

The old man silently lighted his lantern, and asked Faragalla to help him look for a place where the tent would be protected in the rear. Laura sat down on the saddle which the Bedouin

had placed on a stone at the edge of the hill for her use.

Meanwhile, Frau Helene had also dismounted. She began the conversation by talking about the approaching storm and the sultriness of the air. Then she spoke of the cloud-bursts and other elemental disturbances which, during the journey, had placed them in various uncomfortable and even dangerous situations. But even when she passed on to other subjects, she received nothing but monosyllabic replies until the pack-camels appeared and, by the light of lanterns and torches which the dragoman carried with him, and finally that of the fires kindled in three places by the Tawara, the tent was pitched. Every one helped in the work, and Laura feasted her eyes upon the superb picture presented in the changeful light by the brown, muscular men and boys as they set up the tall central pole of the desert house, stretched the top and side-walls of the tent, drew the ropes tight, drove in the pegs, and finally, under old Traut's directions, put the beds and pieces of luggage in their proper places.

When Faragalla, holding a blazing séjal sapling high aloft, walked around it, scanning the completed work with searching gaze, Laura could

not turn her eyes from him; for the vivid light of the firebrand brought out his noble features in strong relief, and in this illumination his tawny hand formed a superb contrast to the white burnous. The whole figure resembled that of a great magician wandering at night, torch in hand, around a hidden treasure to conjure up the spirits that guarded the entrance. She thought she had never beheld so picturesque a scene, and her æsthetic soul revelled in the enjoyment of it. Wherever this man appeared there was something peculiar about him that threw others into the shade. Now he again compelled her to feel a sense of gratitude, for he directed that the tent-pegs, which held the ropes whose slackening would have caused the fall of the light structure, should be weighted with stones. When, with his own strong arms, he laid an especially heavy one here or there, he never omitted to look into her face for approval; but she, with joyous emotion, imagined that by gazing at her he gained fresh strength.

But his acts also showed her that he, too, expected the thunder-storm to burst; for the tent-pegs were never weighted so heavily except in anticipation of one. Here again he proved

himself her watchful guardian spirit; the dragoon, however, shook his old head in mute anxiety.

He and Traut were soon ready to invite the two ladies into the tent. Laura exchanged her travelling dress for a comfortable wrapper, and, after refreshing herself with a cup of tea prepared by Frau Helene, she asked for her portfolio, and by the light of two links took up her pen.

This was not done merely to confide to her diary, as was her habit every evening, what she had experienced and collected during the day, but also to write some important letters. The consul at Damascus must find out for her on what terms the ruins on Mt. Lebanon, with the wood and water-mill near them, could be obtained, and mention some trustworthy and tasteful architect for whom, if she succeeded in making the purchase, she would have employment. The man must be told that he would be obliged to work from her drawings. She also ordered her agent in Cologne to place larger sums at her disposal in Cairo, Alexandria, Beyrout, or Damascus.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE Laura was writing, the oppressive heat in the tent became unendurable to Frau Helene. Besides, she wanted to talk with her countryman, who was said to have followed the young lady. She had long desired to speak freely in German to some one by whom she might expect to be understood, and she believed that she had found such a person in Professor Hartwang. While Laura had talked about the threatening thunderstorm, she had even tried to learn something more about him, but, as usual, had been put off with a few meaningless words.

So, under the pretext of getting a little fresh air, she left the tent. The fire in the professor's camp showed where to find the man whom she was seeking. Achmed, who thought her the more sensible of the two women for whose comfort in the desert it was his duty to provide, willingly accompanied her through the darkness

to the tent of the German chawaga. Besides, the Nubian wanted to speak to him and to his colleague, who was in this gentleman's service.

Hartwang was sitting by the fire with the Tawara, as he enjoyed doing. True, he understood little of their language, but he liked to listen to their songs, and it afforded him both pleasure and instruction to watch their conduct toward one another, their consultations and disputes.

To-night, however, neither song nor eager talk was to be heard beside the scanty fire. The sultriness of the approaching thunder-storm oppressed even the sons of the desert, and they resented the late departure, after they had made the camp and fed the camels, as a Frankish whim. Besides, in the darkness, little wood, dung, or dry desert weeds could be found. The fire would have gone out long ago had not the dragoman sacrificed an empty provision-chest.

This late visitor was not unwelcome to Professor Hartwang. True, his first desire was to discover whether Frau Doctor Vollers came to him from Laura or merely at the dictate of her own curiosity, and he was a sufficiently good reader of human nature to discover very speedily that Laura had nothing to do with the visit. He

would have been better pleased if the companion had sought him as an ambassador—nay, even as a spy; but he showed no sign of his disappointment, and asked pleasantly whether her long journey with Fräulein Vernissen had afforded her what she expected.

This could scarcely have been the case; for the young widow, visibly embarrassed, tried to find a fitting answer, and did not continue until after the professor had urged her to speak with entire frankness.

"True," she began, "I had expected many things would be different when we commenced the journey. But I must certainly regard it as a rare piece of good fortune to wander through the beautiful wide world under such pleasant circumstances. All that I know—it is not much—I learned from books or conversation, and I anticipated seeing many a vague idea transformed into things which I had actually seen and experienced. And, besides—you can scarcely imagine what it means to a woman who has to earn her daily bread—I was to live two whole years, at least, without anxiety. I had been obliged to devote myself earnestly to many things which rarely attract our sex, and I had heard



that Fräulein Vernissen was not only a highly educated lady, but half a scholar. What a delightful interchange of thought we might have during our long companionship!"

"But your hopes were not fulfilled?" asked Hartwang.

"You are her friend," answered Frau Helene, with a slight shake of her pretty, though somewhat narrow head, "but I must admit that there were disappointments."

"In spite of which I cannot believe that Fräulein Vernissen treated you unkindly," replied the professor. "From what I know of her . . ."

"No, indeed, certainly not," the widow eagerly interrupted. "She is kind-hearted, and I should be guilty of the blackest ingratitude if I did not acknowledge with what great generosity . . ."

"You are a widow?" interposed the other.

"Yes, Herr Professor," she answered in a low tone, while a sorrowful expression shadowed her quiet face. "After scarcely eighteen months of married life."

"I sincerely sympathize with you," said Hartwang, and his deep voice expressed warm interest

as he kindly urged her to tell him more of her past life.

“Its course was simple enough,” she began modestly; “yet it seems as if my life had been richer than many a more eventful one. At any rate, it was my lot to know the loftiest heights and the lowest depths of existence. There were five of us sisters, Herr Professor. My father died young. How my mother succeeded, by means of the small pension of the widow of a judge of a minor court, and the lessons she gave, in educating us so far that we could pass the examination for teachers is still a mystery to me. But she *did* succeed, and, in spite of her seventy years, is still a vigorous woman. When scarcely seventeen, and with comparatively little education myself, I undertook the instruction of three unruly children. I was unequal to the task; and, besides, just at that time a heavy burden weighed upon my heart. In short, I went from position to position until, before I entirely despaired of myself and of the goodness of fate, my late husband took pity upon me. He had been a student of theology, and a parish was offered to him; but his conscience forbade him to subscribe to the creed which the gentlemen of the con-

sistory . . . You surely understand. Then he became an author and wielded his pen in support of his religious and political convictions. When he offered himself to me, his name was no longer wholly unknown, and what he published . . .”

“Laura called you Frau Doctor Vollers,” here interrupted Hartwang. “Then you are the widow of the philosopher, hotspur, and assailer of society, Vollers?”

Frau Helene sorrowfully assented, and then went on in a more animated tone: “When he offered himself to me, he could assure me a comfortable support; but before we had been married a year he was attacked by the disease of the lungs which robbed me of him. Yet this very time of penury and nursing became the happiest of our married life—nay, of my whole existence; for the youthful pleasures I sacrificed . . . But those things were buried long ago. It was no small favor of fortune to be permitted to follow the lofty intellectual flight of such a man, though often against my will. What happened afterward was hard to bear. The payment of our debts had consumed the last remnant of our property. I became governess to four dull, disagreeable children of a half-educated landowner on the

frontier of Poland. While there I saw one day Fräulein Vernissen's advertisement, and my dead husband's name induced her to give me the preference over better-recommended applicants; for she turned to me with the question whether I was the widow of the author of "Freemen and Slaves."

"Your 'yes' turned the scale?" asked the professor.

"But not without any further examination. As soon as my employer released me, she summoned me to the Black Forest, where she was living alone with Traut in a secluded little forest-house amid the densest growth of pines. She had a great many books, and was interested in botany. I saw how deeply my quiet nature and steadfast faith in the belief of my childhood disappointed her, and she was astonished to find that I was personally acquainted with her latest apostle, Friedrich Nietzsche, yet firmly opposed his exaggerated theories—nay, could not even take them seriously. Still, after we had spent a week together, she said that I would suit her."

"And so the incompatible couple set out for foreign lands," replied Hartwang. "At the same

time, it seems to me that there was no inclination on your part to bridge the chasm."

"There was no lack of it on my side," the widow eagerly protested, "for I have a grateful heart, and before our departure Fräulein Vernissen showed me as much sympathy as a sister—nay, placed me under obligations by a truly royal generosity."

"Tell me about it," urged the professor. "It is pleasant to hear good of our friends. But be perfectly frank. I know Laura well, and, therefore, may be able, now and then, to explain some things, and perhaps thus place them in a more favorable light."

"But I assure you that my reason for complaining of her treatment is no trivial one," cried the young widow. "You shall hear it. Soon after we became somewhat more intimate, she asked, not from mere curiosity, but with genuine interest, about my former life, desiring to know everything, even the smallest details. I was urged to tell her not only about the first wish of my heart, which was not fulfilled, but the story of my brief marriage—nay, even every particular concerning my old mother and my family. She appeared to be warmly interested in each one.

True, she heard some things that undoubtedly were new to her, and she was both surprised and touched to learn that educated women had been compelled to toil so hard in order not to be forced into a social class lower than the one to which, by their father's profession, they belonged. Possibly she perceived for the first time how much unearned happiness she owed to her inherited wealth, and how easy it made life for her. She certainly tried to make amends to my relatives for what fate had inflicted by rendering the evening of my mother's life secure from all anxiety, and giving my sister Anna, whose lungs were seriously affected . . . But I am going too much into detail."

"No, no," Hartwang answered. "Yet, do you know, Fräulein Laura, in doing this, has showed me not only her kindness, but her shrewdness? She did not want to have a companion whose soul was burdened by anxiety about her relatives."

"That was scarcely in her thoughts," replied the widow. "She cared far more, you may be sure, about lightening life's burden for my family than for putting me in a gayer mood. People do not question as minutely as she did, in order

to obtain an accurate idea of each member of it, for any secondary motive. Nor did she rest until she had gained a tolerably accurate picture of my external and spiritual experiences. When, in doing this, she discovered that during the time of my married life it had been impossible for me to give my mother what I had formerly spared, and that I could not even then begin to do so immediately . . .”

“She did it for you?”

“In the most delicate, generous manner; and at the same time she continued to interest herself in the fate of my relatives. It was like a stolen child that had found its family and was yielding to the longing to make their acquaintance.”

“And did not such a wealth of unselfish interest please you?” asked Hartwang.

“Oh, certainly, Herr Professor, certainly,” she answered with sincere warmth, then fixed her eyes upon the ground in embarrassed silence, as if ashamed of deviating from the truth.

“Yet there was something amiss in it,” he said with a faint smile. “But do not forget that I entreated you to speak with absolute frankness.”

“Good heavens!” Frau Helene began again.

“Who would wish to appear so abominably ungrateful in another’s eyes? But you see, Herr Professor, cordial as was the affection won from me by the angelic goodness of this rare creature, far as it was from my nature to regard her great gifts as the alms of a stranger—the way in which they were bestowed precluded anything of that sort, yet—you demanded entire sincerity—up to this hour I could not conquer it.”

“Well?” asked Hartwang eagerly.

“It first became evident to me during the long journey up the Nile and through the desert,” she answered thoughtfully. “Besides, I was forced in those days to become better acquainted with Fräulein Vernissen. Let me be brief. She had wished to learn everything about me. It had seemed to be an important matter to her to know of every chair in our house, every penny in our possession, every emotion of the mind or heart in each individual in our family—nay, every recess in my own soul and those of my mother and sisters. But I—it had given me only pleasure to prove my gratitude by entire confidence and to conjure up again and again the images of my loved ones. Had there been far more to tell in our simple lives, I should have done it. Then

the thought came to me—now, isn't it my turn to question the rich girl about many things concerning her former life, her singular development, her strange wishes and aspirations?"

"And I hope that you did so."

"Oh, certainly; yet the reply would have deserved to be called anything rather than an answer. And then, Herr Professor, she was, indeed, a generous giver; but—forgive the harsh word—I felt as if I had been robbed. All which hitherto I had carefully hidden in the farthest recesses of my soul—for I am naturally reserved—had been taken from me—me, who had often been vigorously reproved, and what I received in return—the gifts of money and valuables excepted—was nothing—nay, less than nothing. In exchange for full ears I had empty straw; for my best possessions her poorest ones. She did not even think it worth while to clothe her meaning in clear sentences. If I had only failed to perceive how much was passing in her mind, how great was the wealth of her spiritual experiences! I left home at her side with the ardent desire to be something—nay, Heaven helping me, much—to her. But she, who had so much to bestow, withdrew it from me, and also refused

to accept anything at my hands, though I felt sure . . . But, perhaps, this was self-conceit. In short, I seemed to myself like the poor man who offers his good bread to the rich one, and . . . But you have already heard the story."

"Yet are you not carrying your just dissatisfaction too far?" asked Hartwang. "It was not because the intellectual gifts which you had to bestow seemed trivial to Laura that she did not ask for them, but because she was seeking solitude, and the intercourse you desired—you can scarcely deny that—would have prevented her from enjoying it."

"In that case, could she not have been content with the society of her faithful, sensible Traut?" asked Frau Helene.

"Certainly not," was the firm reply. "She might expect to be understood by the widow of your gifted husband. Can you believe that in the companionship of her brother Werner, my dearest friend, the hours we spent together in silence afforded me the richest happiness, the deepest consciousness of pleasure?"

"Why not?" she eagerly exclaimed. "A look of understanding, a movement, nay, even the assurance of mental union, the mystical feeling,

if I may so term it, by which one is bound to the other by invisible spiritual cords, lends a mysterious magic to such hours of silence. But where it is always the part of one only to give and to receive, and the other does not even desire to obtain anything whatever, this mute companionship produces a totally different effect. The friend's presence completed your being, as yours did his. In my case, one silently enjoys the charm of solitude alone. What the other neglected one feels meanwhile—oh, Herr Professor! . . . I wish to be frank, and it is a relief to be permitted to speak to you openly.”

She drew a long breath, and the reflection of the fire shining through the sultry, intense darkness permitted Hartwang to see upon her well-formed lips an expression which showed only too distinctly that this delicate woman was probably entitled to be numbered among those of her sex who were endowed with a strong will. Her blue eyes blazed with a passionate light as, pushing back her smooth, fair hair, she went on eagerly:

“I desire neither to complain nor to accuse; but since you are willing to listen to me, you shall hear what became evident to my mind during this last portion of our journey. You have been

through the same region of the desert—am I wrong in calling it the home of solitude? Into these rocky cliffs retreated thousands of that strange community whose number, though replenished neither by marriages nor births, did not diminish for centuries. You, too, have surely seen many an anchorite's cave. I went into them often, for Fräulein Vernissen searched their recesses with special interest. She must have found something in the aspirations of their dead occupants akin to her own. What led these singular men, who tore themselves from the arms of a beloved wife and thrust dear children from them, deserted their colors or fled from their offices, into this stony wilderness? What gave them the courage to cast duty behind them, and barter the thousand gifts and demands of the world for cheerless solitude and constant privations? Nothing but the firm conviction that it was wise to exchange the fleeting sorrows of this world for the eternal bliss of the one beyond the grave—a delightful goal for the devout. Who could deny it? And yet in every one of these blackened holes in the rock the lonely, forsaken couch and the tiny hearth cried loudly to me; 'It was the most supreme selfishness, and

that alone, which induced them to follow this goal to the end.' The eternal bliss of heaven! Ah, yes! But for whom? Only for the one who fled from the world to struggle for it here, and who believed that he had taken a step backward when some intrusive thought or unwelcome dream showed him those whom he had left behind in tears, widowed and orphaned in the lifetime of the husband and father. What cared these egotists for broken hearts and neglected duties? And every one, I said to myself, who turns his back upon the world to labor for his own salvation, and for that alone, will fall into the error of those dwellers in caves. You will scarcely gainsay me in the opinion that human egotism can scarcely be carried farther than in their circles, that . . ."

"There I must beg to differ from you," interrupted Hartwang with a gesture of denial. "I see to what your eager statement is tending. Laura, in your eyes, represents a modern hermit, and therefore must also possess the selfishness of the strange people whom you have just mentioned, and who, moreover, it may be pointed out, were driven into the desert by the religious current of their age with a stronger power than

their own choice. But, my dear lady, though your view is interesting, I fear it stands on very weak foundations. At least, even in the presence of so keen-sighted an antagonist, I must uphold my opinion that the true anchorite's feeling was exactly the opposite of the selfishness you impute to him. Or can you deny that he hated and abused his own person, the idolized darling of the selfish man—nay, that he exposed himself to disgrace, derision, and contempt, not only without defence, but with a smile of satisfaction? Like you, I am alluding only to the Christian anchorite, though he possesses among the Moslems, Buddhists, and other religious bodies many kinsmen who resemble him as closely as twins. The Christian who occupied the rock-caves, that induced you to pronounce him the most selfish of selfish men, left the world in order to follow the Saviour, in whose person he beheld the personification of all that makes man the image of God. He recognized in the Redeemer of the world incarnate love. To live after His example, he tore from his breast everything that flattered his own nature, and, in doing so, every affection fixed upon anything connected with the world, no matter whether it concerned people or

things; for it was necessary to make room for the great divine Love that embraced all mankind—nay, the entire universe. But, since sorrow belongs to every living creature, as the shadow does to the body or smoke to fire, the heart which encompasses all creation necessarily also contains within it the sorrows of all humanity, and being full of love for his neighbor, feels what pains and troubles him. The anchorite himself bled from every wound he saw inflicted upon others. But when he succumbed to the excess of suffering which he made his own, he parted from life here below, which had long been of so little value to him, like a captive liberated from a dungeon. His aspiration for heavenly reward went hand in hand with the yearning to copy the most sublime model; but the Saviour's person appears to me as absolutely free from selfishness as that great world-embracing love which is the noblest gift bestowed upon humanity since its existence."

Frau Helene had listened to these words in astonishment. She had been accustomed to expect totally different views from men of science, and it was difficult for her to reconcile them with the nature and training of the well-known naturalist and surgeon. In her letters to her mother,

she had expressed, with a touch of self-complacency, what she thought she had recognized, as it were, by her own experience, on the scene of the anchorites' abode, to have been the main-spring of this great movement, and had with difficulty refrained from explaining Laura's conduct to her by the selfishness of her hermit-like life. But her mother, who was constantly anxious about the daughter so far away, at least must believe her to be content, and be able to think with pleasure of her and the travelling companion to whom she was so greatly indebted. Besides, it was distasteful to her frank nature to speak ill of Laura behind her back. Now she rejoiced that she had not mentioned the idea of which she had been a little vain. It was by no means difficult for her to admit the superior knowledge of a man like the professor; it even seemed a matter of course that he had supported his opinion so earnestly. She was by no means easily influenced, and, besides, was accustomed to independent thought. Yet she acknowledged to Hartwang that his conception of the character of the anchorites went deeper than hers, which had been drawn, as it were, from the surface.

"Yet you made a grave charge on your as-

sumption," observed Hartwang disapprovingly; but Frau Helene entreated him not to bear her a grudge on account of her hasty judgment, so far as it concerned Fräulein Vernissen. Besides, his view of the anchorites concerned only the pearls of the species; in many she might, perhaps, be right.

"Possibly," he answered calmly. "Yet ought we to judge the spirit of an army by that of the men degraded to the guard-house?"

"But it would scarcely be just to fix our eyes only upon the heroes of the iron cross," she answered modestly.

"That would be the better way," he returned firmly. "They only fulfilled what should be the duty of every one. Besides, I but showed you the root from which grew this strange tree that produced such singular excrescences and also many a bad fruit. You are wrong, too, if you see numerous warriors in this army of faith fighting under the standard of selfishness; but I did not intend to give any historical instruction. I am only the friend of my friend, and when I see her too hastily condemned, I am glad to utter a warning. Laura and you are now thrown upon one another. Your relation is—pardon the ex-

pression—thoroughly muddled. Knowing the independent nature of my young friend, this would have caused me little concern a few hours ago. Now that I perceive you can really be something to her, unthankful as is the part of ‘go-between,’ I will perform it.”

“Oh, if you could only succeed!” cried the widow, sincerely moved; but he interrupted her with an entreaty not to expect too much from his influence, which might only too easily be regarded as non-existent, since, in her present mood, the young lady by no means desired another meeting. “One thing, however,” he added, “I can do already. I can help you to understand better one with whom you will still have many things to share. But first let me ask one question: How did the impression of her which you received from others harmonize with your own experience?”

At this moment a brilliant flash of lightning pierced the intense darkness, but no peal of thunder followed.

Hartwang pointed to the dazzling sheets of flame illumining at intervals the masses of clouds slowly rising from the south, and, as Frau Helene hesitated to answer, remarked: “Pray,

go on quickly. The first roll of thunder will summon you back to the tent, and I should be sorry to lose the opportunity of setting many things here to rights."

Then Frau Helene raised her hands, earnestly entreating him to relieve her of this difficult task by telling her what seemed to him desirable to communicate concerning Fräulein Vernissen's early youth and character; but he declined to do this, repeating his demand with such earnest yet kindly firmness that, after a brief pause for reflection, she began: "Good heavens, how difficult it is! Besides, I know so very little. Every one who congratulated me on my new position emphasized the fact that she belonged to one of the wealthiest families in the Rhine country. Old Traut, too, finds most pleasure in talking about the grand style of housekeeping maintained by her dead employers. Many congratulated me upon the brilliant new position, and, perhaps, they were right; but when fate throws sugar into the water, there is never any lack of friends to pour in a drop of wormwood. Mine did not neglect it, and so I heard from well-meaning monitors that Fräulein Vernissen was a combina-

tion of the strangest caprices, and a pattern 'new woman.' At her country-seat she rode man-fashion on an English saddle; in the city she dressed so simply that it could not help attracting attention to one so wealthy. Her only associates there were men of learning, and she worked in a laboratory. She did not hesitate to tramp among the mountains all day long, sometimes alone, sometimes as the only lady in a party of naturalists, on botanical or geological expeditions. Instead of spending her evenings in society or at the theatre during the winter months that she remained in Berlin, she passed them in a smoky tap-room with learned men and artists of the most Bohemian tendencies, and was conspicuous among them."

"And, at the same time," Hartwang indignantly exclaimed, "she was reported to smoke Havana cigars and to drink brandy by the tumblerful. If it were not so base, it would make one laugh. Of course, there is a grain of truth in it all. If only a tiny spark exists, slander comes quickly enough and blows, blows till the flame blazes. But you believed all this?"

"Scarcely half, and even that only before I

knew her," the widow answered eagerly. . . .

"Yet what I was told concerning her childhood and earliest youth gave it a semblance of truth."

"Well?" asked the professor anxiously.

"Even the most bitter did not utter a word of ill-will concerning the father. All called him a shrewd, generous, tireless business man. True, his extensive business enterprises allowed him no time to think of his children. The mother, too, I heard mentioned with respect."

"Yet the familiar 'only' or 'but,' of course, did not fail to be spoken of her also!" exclaimed the professor.

"Oh, no," replied the widow, smiling mournfully. "Her desire to shine by means of her well-preserved beauty and her husband's wealth could hardly be reconciled, it was said, with her devout piety. She had urged her daughter far too much to plunge with her into the whirlpool of pleasure and, at the same time, to share her religious exercises. Laura had thus become disgusted with society and religion, from which her brother, the naturalist, also estranged her. I have since learned from her own lips that this talented young man and both her parents were torn from her within a few days of one another

by the cholera, and she even intimated how deep an influence this cruel blow had exerted upon her whole mental life. At any rate, her aversion not only to society, but to the whole structure of our social life, is said to have first appeared plainly after it fell. That is all."

"Not much, and yet enough to convert a philanthropist into a Timon," cried Hartwang. "Laura's father—you know that—understood the demands of educating his talented son far less than those of his business. And his wife! The husband could leave the care of the daughter to her with the utmost confidence. He did so, and since she knew the duties imposed by the position of the wealthy manufacturer over whose house she presided as hostess, she also fulfilled the demands of hospitality. With wise foresight she obliged her young daughter, who could scarcely be induced to leave her books, experiments, and collections, to conquer her dread of holiday attire and guests. And, besides, the term 'strict religiosity' could scarcely be less aptly applied than to her. She had a deeply religious nature. When her son, an earnest investigator and thinker, was compelled by convictions attained after severe conflicts to renounce the devout faith of his

childhood, he saw with sincere sorrow how his sister's keen intellect was pursuing his course. He had perceived in his mother's religion the 'blue flower' which first bestows on the feminine nature its true charm, and with which woman, in many episodes of her life, cannot dispense without serious loss. His knowledge might be correct, but he doubtless recognized the boundaries imposed upon the human intellect, for he readily admitted that, in the domain of the unsearchable, the premonitions of a devout heart might easily come nearer to the truth than the clear deductions of a well-trained intellect. He whom calumny accuses of leading his sister to infidelity, I myself with deep emotion saw, in the midst of the exacting period when he was completing his first introductory work, bury himself in Lord Bacon's writings for no other purpose than to prove to the beloved child, whose brain was so alert and untiring, by the aid of the great Englishman, that knowledge and religion are not incompatible, and both, each in its own sphere, can be permitted full activity. Frau Vernissen knew her child, and did not venture to oppose forcibly the rebellious thoughts which, with deep anxiety, she clearly perceived were

seething in Laura's mind. But how it happened that the orphan so abruptly abandoned so many things that her mother's love and example and the faithful care of an admirable father and brother . . ."

Here he paused suddenly, for another flash of lightning in the south was followed by the deep, dull rumble of distant thunder.

At the same moment they heard Traut's voice calling. She had ventured out into the darkness to look for the "Frau Doctor," whom the young lady, after finishing her letters, had missed from the tent.

The conversation could not be continued, though the widow would have so gladly learned far more about one whom she had at first considered a rarely gifted creature, and afterward believed she had discovered to be the very embodiment of feminine caprice and the supreme selfishness which her favorite teacher permitted the Over Man to practise. Now she felt that her judgment had probably been too severe and had led her to a mistaken manner of treating Laura. This conviction was instantly sealed; for, after Hartwang had clasped her hand in farewell, he remarked in a tone too low to be understood by

the maid: "What you said concerning the baneful influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's writings may be correct. Are you well acquainted with this dangerous visionary?"

Frau Helene assented to this with a mute, almost angry nod, but he continued: "I have only heard of him in conversation and casually in books and journals. You will probably think of the general matters which we have mentioned. In particular, I will add only this: What is found in the dusty caves of the anchorites rarely suits the most modern ideas. Laura's nature is not a selfish, but a remarkably independent one, which allowed the bold moralist whom she followed so great an influence only because his still greater, nay, unprecedented independence attracted her. It is natural that you should condemn the revolutionary doctrines which she would like to follow, and I do not blame you for having done so with the utmost positiveness. I only regret that Laura's conduct induced you to place a sword, as it were, between your intellectual intercourse. You timidly avoid your travelling companion; she moves beside you with utter indifference. What a state of affairs! And how much you might have received from each other!

Amber—you ought both to be reminded of it—must be rubbed before it gains strength to show its power of attraction. Laura's heart is too kind for her to repulse intentionally a lady in your position. You will be obliged to live together some time longer; but in order to cause a transformation in her, you must cast off your reserve to my friend, as you did to me, and, if it comes to a conflict, use the weapons you do not lack, instead of surrendering at the first light wound. Large bells do not ring until after a strong blow, and there is nothing small in the one whose silence angers you."

He held out his hand to her kindly as he spoke, and the widow went back with her companion.

As Hartwang saw her enter the tent of his ungracious friend, another flash illumined the clouds, and a loud peal of thunder followed in a few seconds.

CHAPTER VI.

THE two women had gained the shelter of the tent just in time; the dark clouds had oppressed the desert, and every creature that lived and breathed in its domain, long enough with their brooding sultriness. Now the tempest, weary of its long restraint, seemed to wish to rave out its fury. The mighty conflict did not commence in the sky, but on the earth; for over the surface of the desert light clouds of dust were whirling in circles, as if in sport, then gathered in denser masses in fiercer conflict with one another. Here the spirits of the wind gliding over the ground swept the sand from the dry rocks, tossed it high aloft, and blew skyward with a swift, swirling motion whatever their sultry breath seized—dust, straw, withered desert weeds, and sheaves of glowing sparks from the camp-fires. Burning brands rolled over the ground and were caught with difficulty by the light-footed Bedouin boys,

whose shirts fluttered wildly as their wearers battled with the gale.

The threatening masses of clouds still hung in sluggish, majestic repose above the wild raging of the wind-spirits below, the thunder still followed very slowly the flashes of lightning in the south and east; but the tumult in the air, which swept away in its eddying circles everything that was not firmly secured, was the unerring har-binger of a severe thunder-storm.

The dragoman ordered the fire to be extinguished, and Faragalla's white burnous glimmered through the darkness, now here, now there, as he again passed around his mistress's tent to examine and strengthen the fastenings of the pegs and ropes. The disagreeable grunting of the camels, which dislike rain, drowned the shouting of the Tawaras, who were trying to provide shelter for themselves and their animals during the coming storm.

Usually at this hour deep silence reigned throughout the camp, unless the stillness was interrupted by the rhythm of a Bedouin song, and this profound silence of the night had no little share in Laura Vernissen's enjoyment of desert life. To-day she would have found special

pleasure in yielding to its spell, but since her meeting with Hartwang everything seemed to have conspired to disturb the delicious repose which she had found in the midst of her journeying, and which had proved so great a benefit.

True, she had had no interruption while writing her letters; yet this very occupation troubled the calm peace for whose sake she loved the desert, for it brought her once more into connection with the world from which she had fled and in whose noisy bustle she could not find the quiet reflection for which she longed. A consulate, a banker's office, buying, money, checks—what horrible things they were! how destructive to every purer, loftier mood! And Hartwang near, he who had done his part to drive her from her home into a foreign land! Only yesterday it had seemed a profitable result of her long journey that she had succeeded in forcing him from a prominent place in her mind and heart, and but a short time ago she had found courage to banish him from her presence. Nothing that had belonged to the world she had abandoned should force itself into the little castle on Mt. Lebanon, least of all he. Besides, his exacting profession would bind him to old Europe. His

place was there, as Faragalla's was in the desert. What a castellan he would be! At his side she need fear no interruption. He could watch her silently for hours while she was examining with a microscope the plants which she had gathered and arranging them in a herbarium. With what tireless zeal he had helped her botanize and search for certain minerals after an accurate description had been given him of what she desired! And how much better everything would be when she could speak Arabic—which she understood perfectly, but could not utter without difficulty—as fluently as her native language! She would surely reach that point in a few months, and then it would be her joy to bring to light the gems which were surely lying in the depths of his noble soul, so completely devoted to her, and his untrained mind. And when these jewels were once brought to the light of day, what a pleasure it would be to polish and set them!

He had learned to love her as his mistress, dedicated to her the boundless tenderness of his glowing heart, yet in the modesty of the strong, free soul, subject to her alone, forced himself never to utter the entreaty many a glance from

her eyes, many a light pressure of her hand permitted.

The young spring of their union would pass like an ecstasy for both; but when passionate yearning had been satisfied and the time came in which the mind and soul also demanded satisfaction, *his* soul would lie before her like an unwritten page. What a delight it would be to draw him in his own language to the height of her intellect! Even though he should remain to the end inferior in book-lore to a Hartwang and his companions, so much the better. The rubbish which must be removed before the former could become full men in her view did not exist in the son of the desert. The seed of the highest knowledge, uninjured by weeds or caterpillars, could attain vigorous growth in the virginal soil of his soul. How curtly, how shrewdly, with how apt a simile he had answered many a query! When she compared him mentally with the Tawaras and other Bedouins whom she had met, a smile of satisfaction rested on her lips. They appeared like mousing crows beside him, the brilliantly plumaged eagle. It had often seemed to her utterly incomprehensible how, in the heart of the desert, he could keep his garments and

cloak so spotlessly white and clean. He had kept his soul equally stainless. That must be no less free than his external life; for while the members of his tribe often knelt with their faces turned toward Mecca and prayed with uplifted hands, he never did so. His answer to the question why he omitted it, "Did I ever see you do it, oh, mistress?" was one of the delicately veiled confessions of love with which he often made her happy. Even in the highest things he took the queen of his heart as a pattern. The free son of the wilderness had probably also meant to say: "If you, a woman, rely upon yourself and move through the world independent of higher powers, why should I, a man, appeal to them for aid?"

His straightforward, simple mind had enabled him to find what the philosophers of her native land had attained only by severe struggles. Then she remembered the pathetic indignation with which Hartwang, in one of their last conversations in Germany, had warned her against her vanity, her culpable self-conceit, when she showed him with how bold a hand she had endeavored to strip off even the last of the chains that bound her to the ancient prejudices in which she had been educated. How zealously he had striven to

prevent her from becoming a free creature in the sense of the Over Man, whose precepts strengthened her courage to obey, with unrestricted independence, the demands of her own nature! The memory of this reprimand made the angry blood mount into her cheeks even now. Beside the Titan who was bracing his giant shoulders to overthrow the mouldering structure of modern society, Peter was only a talented, steadfast man of the best human stamp. One thing, however, he utterly lacked—ardent hatred of every subjugation, the fearless courage to share in the great work of transforming all standards, nay, even the good-will to allow others, and especially woman, the liberty to which she had the same birthright as man, and which he had merely, as the stronger, insolently denied. It had been easier for him to resign her whom he loved than to tolerate in her what her inmost soul demanded and against which his sole argument was that it was offensive to ancient prejudices, whose pitiful decrepitude she dared point out to him and to every one. She had often felt during her journey, when she thought of him, that she had grown a head taller, and he, who had found it impossible to allow her what, by virtue of her

human rights, she was entitled to claim, should, perhaps, learn to-morrow that there was one genuine man whom it rendered proud and happy to call her his mistress and to fulfil, with passionate eagerness, even her boldest demands.

This train of thought was interrupted by the entrance of her travelling companion. Frau Helene's cheeks were flushed, and wisps of straw clung to her tangled hair.

The peal of thunder that accompanied her delighted Laura. "Like the ghost of the Com-mandatore amid the glare of lightning and the rumbling of tin thunder," she cried gayly. "But how bright your color is! Not a sign of the stone guest. And how the wind whistles through the chinks! Oh, my poor paper!"

The gust had caught the contents of the portfolio, and sheets of blue and white paper were fluttering around the tent. Traut and the widow helped her to collect them again, and a strange, restless life began to stir in the usually quiet spot. Whatever did not stand or lie firmly in its place—handkerchiefs, loose tent-ropes, plants arranged to dry, the table-cover, cap-ribbons, Traut's sewing—waved up and down or were tossed hither and thither.

"This is beginning to grow disagreeable," cried Laura, laughing. "I have little talent for being an angel, but if this continues, we must be prepared for flight, who knows whither? Brrr-rr! It really seems to be coming nearer."

A brilliant flash of lightning, followed almost instantly by a peal of thunder, had occasioned this exclamation. "True," she added, "here the tent stands exposed to every breath of air, like a windmill. It would have been better protected over yonder, but I would rather defy the elements than endure the discomfort caused by our fellow men."

"I only fear," observed the widow, "that this time flight was of little service; Professor Hartwang has encamped but a few hundred paces from here."

"I hope he is not much better sheltered than we," replied Laura. "He drove us out of our tent."

"That reproach does violence to the true state of affairs," said the widow. "I think I remember that Herr Hartwang earnestly endeavored to detain you in the Gurundel."

"Are you afraid?" asked the girl, surprised

by this eager protest from the companion who for weeks had been so taciturn.

"If you mean afraid of the storm," replied the other, "I can answer yes, in so far as I prefer sleeping at night to lying awake, and a dry bed to a damp one. Besides, I am only a weak child of humanity, and in the presence of the unchained elements feel more deeply than usual my own powerlessness and insignificance."

"I do not, I might answer with perfect sincerity; but I have learned how tragically you take such things. I have already intimated more than once how much I regretted having interrupted you so inconsiderately on that occasion, but you do not seem to forget it, and punish me by reserve."

"Which you endured the more easily," Frau Helene retorted, "the more firmly you clung to your opinions and the less I had to say that seemed to you worth hearing."

"On the contrary," cried Laura. "How rich in promise were the first weeks of our companionship! What did you not know and think of! True, it was impossible for me, sincere as I am, to agree with most of your views, because they

come from a time and region which seem to me to lie far behind us. But what to me is a play of the intellect to you is an affair of the heart, and thus every interchange of opinion readily gains a touch of bitterness. If I should now assert that, in a thunder-storm, I feel differently from you, and should venture to give reasons for it . . .”

“You would find in me an attentive listener,” answered the widow.

“Well, then,” Laura began with renewed zeal, “in a tempest like this I realize, with peculiar distinctness, that I am a part of Nature, and in the great moments in which she proclaims her mighty power—in the roaring hurricane, amid the lightning and tempest—I feel proud of being a limb of this titanic, self-renewing, indestructible giant. The hero’s child, who sees his father’s invincible sword fell the foe, perhaps feels as I do when the mountains shake in the thunder-storm, and the hurricane uproots the oaks. Surely you know that I am anything but what is called a merry person, and yet I long to shout aloud for joy when I witness such tremendous exhibitions of the powers of Nature. And I know why. So long as the tempest is raging

I have not the least recollection of the society to which I belong and what binds me to it, the society I abhor, because it alone renders the lives of human beings so pitiful. Where we are compelled to forget it entirely and belong, heart and mind, to Nature, even we dust-born mortals may touch heaven. That was a tremendous peal! My cloak, Traut. I will watch this battle of the giants."

"You would far better not do so," Frau Helene anxiously entreated. "Don't you hear how the rain dashes upon the tent?"

"The wind will break your umbrella, and you won't have a dry thread on you," said Traut.

"And catch cold, that terrible cold!" cried Laura contemptuously. "I can bear it, and I should blame you if you allowed yourselves to be soaked with me. There is as yet, to my knowledge, no travelling lightning-conductor, which could be fastened to the pole of the tent."

"Or Achmed, the father of conveniences, would carry one with him," replied the widow. "But I believe that the society which you so deeply despise is capable of producing such an article, if it is wanted to paralyze the power of august Nature's lightnings, even in the desert.

Moreover, it seems to me loftier and more difficult to conquer Nature than to obey her commands and applaud her as an exulting admirer."

Laura had listened in perplexity to this well-concealed attack. Was it excitement that had broken through her companion's reserve? Yes, that was it, and she immediately exclaimed: "You've been talking with Hartwang."

"Certainly," Frau Helene answered. "But what I just said does not come from him, it is associated with your own remark. In my youth my own heart beat faster when the tempest raged around me, and the same thing would probably happen now; but in such storms—I repeat it—I feel that I am the toy of mighty Nature, which can put an end to my life as my hand would crush the flies hovering around yonder flame." At this moment a gust of wind tore open the door of the tent and extinguished the lamp.

Deep darkness filled the sultry, canvas-covered apartment, but Laura allowed neither the gloom nor her companion's remonstrances to impair the joyous excitement which had seized her. Clapping her hands like a child, she cried gayly: "There you have it. The kindly Providence that

protects the sparrow upon the house-tops saves the ephemerides which are so willing to lose their lives in the flames by removing the murderous instrument. Or does it merely wish to show me that, spite of rain and wind, it is pleasanter outside than in this stuffy prison? Once more, Traut, my cloak!"

"I must first find it in this darkness," answered the old servant sulkily, trying to light the lamp again, while her mistress and Frau Helene exerted all their strength to keep the door closed.

As soon as a flickering light again illumined the tent and the cloak had been found, the girl, with the hood drawn over her head, prepared to go out of doors. Her companion was about to follow; but while winding a shawl about her, another gust of wind extinguished the light for the second time, and at the same moment a broad glare of flame blinded the two women who had remained behind, while the rattling, crashing, and thundering made them feel as if a house was falling in upon their heads.

Shrieking aloud, Traut, who felt the earth trembling under her feet, clung to the young widow's arm. "Anything but that . . ." escaped the old servant's quivering lips, but she did

not finish the sentence; her tongue was paralyzed by anxiety for her whom she had tended when, in her little short dresses and fluttering fair hair, the child had been the sweet plaything of the whole household.

In the midst of such a hurricane, such thunder, the luckless girl was exposing herself to the pouring rain. The lightning must have just struck something close at hand. Perhaps Laura herself! She groped her way speechlessly through the dense darkness, trying to find her cloak, and as she lost the right direction and touched a bed with her right hand, she seized the light covering and wrapped it about her head and shoulders. Another flash showed her the half-open door, and with the cry, "Out of doors in such a deluge! . . . Though I . . ."

But the pealing of the thunder prevented Frau Helene's hearing the rest of the sentence. She, too, now drew her shawl more closely around her head, and also prepared to go outside. She felt that it was her duty to withhold the girl whose bread she ate and in whom, spite of her disapproval, she felt a keen interest, from indulging in a whim which might prove fatal. But when, like the bather who, late in autumn, ventures into

the cold water, she stepped out, the wind drove the torrents of rain into her face with such violence that she again stepped back into the shelter of the tent. The next instant she was ashamed of her cowardice. The strong-willed young widow summoned all her strength and courage, and had already succeeded in forcing her way a few steps against the fury of the elements, when she heard voices close beside her, and another flash of lightning—this time not from the south, but from the east—showed her Laura and the servant. The latter had run against her young lady just outside the door of the tent and compelled her to give up her senseless walk.

Soon after the women had gone back into the tent, a faint glimmer of light appeared at the door, and the dragoman, lantern in hand, asked if it would not be of service to the ladies. No lamp or torch was of any use in such a tempest.

The attentive old man's gift was gladly accepted, and the lantern placed upon the table, but the flame shining through the tiny brass-framed panes diffused but a dim twilight through the spacious enclosure. It permitted Traut to free Laura from her drenched wrap, which the latter

willingly allowed. Frau Helene's questions, on the contrary, she answered with repellent curt-ness. Besides, even the dim light of the lantern revealed what a transformation had occurred in the features which, a short time ago, had worn so radiant a look.

The companion knew her well enough to perceive that something must have occurred which deeply agitated her. Although not only curiosity but genuine interest urged her to inquire into the cause, she refrained; for she was aware that it would have been vain.

Perhaps Laura would not even have vouchsafed an answer; for when she shut her lips so firmly, and so deep a line formed in her high forehead, she was unapproachable, and rebuffed every advance with a harshness usually foreign to her nature. Perhaps she had met Hartwang outside, and her haughty independence had been wounded.

The first part of this conjecture, at least, was correct.

CHAPTER VII.

THE girl had left the tent with her heart throbbing joyously, and had battled her way bravely against the wind and rain. True, the water which the gale blew into her face was only lukewarm, but it had seemed like a deliverance to escape from the close, sultry atmosphere inside the canvas walls. Besides, the struggle against the elements was a genuine delight. Her combative nature had needed such an exertion, and as a cool current mingled with the warm air of the tempest which she was breasting, she had paused, refreshed, to gaze first at the black sky and then at the surrounding landscape.

It had been difficult to keep her footing, but she rejoiced that she was able to do so, even for a moment. Proud of her vigorous power of resistance, which enabled her joyously and firmly to tread her self-chosen path, in spite of all opposition, she had stood gazing straight before her,

when the darkness was suddenly illumined by a glare of light that did not appear to be a flash of lightning, but rather a mass of fire, which made everything around as distinct as if it were broad day. At the same moment a deafening peal of thunder shook the earth that supported her, but she scarcely noticed it; for directly opposite, scarcely twenty paces distant, she saw Peter Hartwang and beside him Sheik Faragalla.

The pair, so utterly dissimilar, stood relieved against the yellow glare of lightning as though it were the golden background of a picture.

Not an expression of either had escaped her notice—nay, she had seen the Bedouin impetuously strike his breast, and with frowning brows threaten to rush upon the other. How fiercely the large black eyes, fixed upon his opponent, were flashing, while Hartwang, with a superior smile, was calmly trying to soothe him!

Laura thought that she had never seen a prouder image of virile strength ready for battle than that revealed by the vivid flash of lightning during her walk, and it came to her like a revelation that the Bedouin resembled in every feature the Over Man, as Friedrich Nietzsche, to whose new philosophy she looked up as the greatest of

all intellectual achievements, described him. The only point of difference from the picture was that he was not fair. But the fair locks might be represented by the golden-yellow kufije fluttering in the gale.

She could not help comparing Faragalla to the magnificent beast of prey, which the Over Man was said to resemble, and no one appeared to her to possess, in equal measure, the traits of this Over Man—daring courage, lofty pride, tameless love of liberty, and the most absolute want of consideration. And Hartwang, the philosopher, obedient to all sorts of temporizing, binding duties, tyrannical limitations! How like the type of the man mentally in bondage, the slave he appeared to her, beside the free lion of the desert, subject to no restraint!

She felt as though the lightning had showed her the two men side by side, in so bright a glare, in order to render it easier to choose. But after this sight was there any question? Others might fear to share their fate with such a man, accustomed to submit neither to spiritual nor external control, but she knew the proud soul dwelling within this heroic form. Men might tremble before him; to her whom he loved he had ever

showed himself the most humble of servants. A sign, a glance from her sufficed to melt his fierceness, transform it into the most self-sacrificing devotion. The thought made her proud, and with the firm resolve to obey the demands of her nature, and in his love and a union with him find the greatest happiness possible for a mortal to enjoy, she returned to the tent.

The next morning should give Faragalla the reward for his heroic reserve, the fulfilment of the most ardent desire of his heart.

If Peter was a witness of her choice, she would regret it; but why had he not obeyed her command to leave her? Perhaps to-morrow her travelling companion would help her persuade him to continue his journey, that he might be spared this sorrow. He was still near her heart, and the fear of causing him pain had made her return to her companions grave and thoughtful, instead of with the radiant face of a betrothed bride.

She had sacrificed the pleasure of continuing her conflict with the tempest; for in the tent the magnificent picture displayed by the light of the divine fire was constantly before her mental vision. When Frau Helene entreated her to go

to rest, she replied that she wished to sit up longer, but gave her and the servant permission to do so, only she advised them not to undress.

This counsel needed no explanation; the violence of the storm was increasing, and the tent rocked to and fro till the post in the centre swayed, the poles cracked, and the ropes creaked. Besides, every flash of lightning was instantly followed by the thunder, and one succeeded another with alarming rapidity. The storm-clouds from the south had met those rising from the east, and the rain had become a flood. Torrents of water dashed upon the roof of the tent, and the little streams trickling between it and the canvas walls were beginning to form on the floor a pool that reflected the light of the lantern. Laura paced restlessly up and down the narrow space, while Frau Helene and Traut sat on the edge of the bed. The former would have preferred to walk also, but the space was too small for two.

Laura's movements often brought her near the table, on which lay the letters she had written to the consul in Damascus and to her banker. They were proofs of the seriousness of her intention, and at sight of them the question whether the risk might not be too great again and again

forced itself upon her. With what pitiless violence Faragalla sometimes dealt with his co-religionists! Did not Hartwang's calmness in meeting the Bedouin's outbreak of rage show, after all, a certain superiority of character?

Yes; the professor would never forget himself. But, on the other hand, he was scarcely capable of a great, overmastering passion.

It was the haughty recklessness of his nature that impressed upon Faragalla the stamp of the Over Man.

Again the vision of his splendid, combative hero-figure rose before her, and it seemed a thousand times more desirable to be swept away, she knew not whither, by the tempest of his uncurbed impulses than to follow from conventionality to conventionality Peter's cautious steps—safe indeed, but fettered.

To obtain the right to live her own life according to her own nature, which was her just due, would have been impossible as the wife of Hartwang. He lacked the organ to comprehend the new time and its demands. His firm composure was certainly priceless in his arduous profession, but it would be fatal to the happiness in love which hovered before her imagination. At home, even

before, through Nietzsche's mental achievements, her aspiration for liberty had become her final goal, her heart had spoken loudly enough in his behalf, yet even at that time his love had not been sufficiently great to submit to the conditions which she imposed upon him after his wooing. And still she had asked nothing from him to which she did not believe herself entitled by virtue of her rights as a human being and a woman. He had refused with special indignation to fulfil her certainly fair desire that both parties must be free to sever the bond that united them as soon as either found affection for the other beginning to grow cool. But how could she, who had seen sympathetic minds so zealously and convincingly uphold free love, give up this demand when she had once resolved to bind herself by the solemn vow which society requires? He was a man, she a woman, like every other human being, and how often she had seen the love plighted at the altar forsworn! Now, in the presence of her newly awakened fancy for Faragalla, she realized for the first time how just her demand had been. It had saved them both from sorrowful renunciation, enduring falsehood, or a bondage that could be tolerable only so long as love rendered it so.

He who also prized liberty so highly would not grant it to her who believed that her right to it was not an iota less because she was a woman. Yet he, who had known her from childhood, was sure that she would never abuse it, and would make it serve only his own benefit so long as he succeeded in keeping love for him alive in her heart.

Besides, she was no "new woman" in the ordinary sense. It was distasteful to her to render herself, by dress or mannish conduct, unlike other women, who yielded to the compulsory demands of the society against which every fibre of her being rebelled and would rebel forever.

Of what value was the wealth she inherited if it could not afford her the possibility of procuring the independence which she believed she had recognized as the greatest blessing earth could bestow on woman also? For its sake she had resigned the hope of going through life happy in a good man's love, and set off on a journey.

While travelling she had found the solitude which was already dear. What she expected from it was fulfilled when she had been permitted to live and wander without looking to the right

or left or taking heed of anything, in the most complete harmony with herself.

True, the longing for her friend had sometimes awaked, but—at least she had believed so—she could scarcely have been happier in a harmonious marriage than in those quiet months when nothing disturbed her peace of mind. During the last ones her heart had begun to wish anew as she gratefully saw a free man obey her every wish with passionate devotion.

It now seemed to her generous nature a cause for regret that, in their differences of opinion, she had treated her travelling companion with more harshness than justice. True, for a time Frau Helene's reserve had been agreeable to her, since through it the blessing of solitude had been able to exert its influence upon her, even while in the widow's society. After the dawn of her regard for Faragalla, her travelling companion's presence had become burdensome; but she soon learned to value it again, for she felt that it saved her from rashness. Often she had even desired a word of warning from the lips of the woman who, though only a few years older than herself, was more sensible and prudent.

Traut, it is true, on the journey to Petraea had

scolded about the "brown devil," who, she protested, would lead them all into misfortune; but Laura had sternly forbidden the maid ever to speak so improperly again of a man to whom she owed the utmost respect and gratitude; and the woman obeyed, though she remained no less hostile to Faragalla.

As the girl passed her travelling companion, who, with half-closed eyes—her nodding head showed that—was struggling against sleep, she asked herself what Frau Helene, who, though not equal to the liberating demands of the new era, was certainly clear-sighted, would say if she confided to her the plan she had in mind concerning Faragalla.

At the same time a smile hovered around her red lips; for she imagined the horror of the ex-governess, whom, moreover, Peter appeared to have won to his side completely. And not only her aunts and cousins at home, but every member of so-called "good society" would join unanimously in Frau Helene's exclamation of grief.

It was different with Hartwang. He would probably press his hand upon his bleeding heart; yet, perhaps, in spite of the sorrow she inflicted upon him, wish her happiness, and therefore . . .

It caused her deep and sincere pain to give him such suffering—and it seemed an actual misfortune that she should be compelled to wound so true a friend, to whom she owed so great a debt of gratitude. Yet must she do this—was there not still time for her to renounce the supreme happiness for which she hoped, and content herself with the safer, though more modest, lot that Hartwang offered?

Modesty!

This idea had gained a tinge of contemptuous scorn through the teachings of her new apostle. The right to number herself among Over Men would be forfeited by such an act of sacrifice, for the Over Man, according to the new philosophy, must give the demands of his own nature full sway, without heeding the opposition or the suffering of others. What society terms “consideration” was only a pitiable weakness, and she desired to be strong and prove herself so, though only a woman. It was merely necessary to maintain her independence more firmly than ever.

Agitated to the inmost depths of her soul, she quickened her pace as she moved up and down in the tent. But she suddenly paused; for the doubt whether it might not be a mere impulse of

the senses that attracted her to the Bedouin forced itself upon her. Yet, suppose it should be so? That would only be another advance in the path she had chosen; for then, in accordance with the demand of Feuerbach, whose teachings she had formerly followed with intense devotion, she would have drawn nearer to Nature, to the sensuality from whose abstract thought she had withdrawn. Of the trinity which the Master placed highest—subjectivity, nature, love—she had certainly only been able to maintain the personal characteristic in the philosopher's sense. Between her and Nature, on the contrary, a thousand scruples and prejudices had forced themselves. In sensuality she had succeeded in perceiving the divine meaning not at first to be diverted from the ideal existing within it. Now she felt that she could do this, and that she understood Feuerbach. Formerly the abstract had held her captive. Now she realized that love was really the connecting link uniting the abstract to the concrete. It reconciled the soul to Nature and effected the union of human being with human being. Well for her that she, too, had at last become a sharer in it, that she had now succeeded in casting aside the prejudice that

saw in the victory of reason over the senses the highest triumph of human will. To break the old fetters in this domain of life also seemed to her to mean a new claim to the title of the Over Man. She would do this on the other side of the old worm-eaten philosophy, or, as Nietzsche called it, on the further side of good and evil.

True, hitherto she had longed to be clasped in the Bedouin's embrace, less from any impulse of the senses than because she saw embodied in him the ideal which she had formed of true manliness, and, to her intense desire for independence, it seemed an exquisite delight to form, in defiance of society, a union with the freest of the free. The girl who had had so many suitors desired to offer herself to him because she could imagine no greater contrast than Faragalla and the effeminate lions of the drawing-rooms that she had left behind her. Moreover, the humble devotion of this proud, strong man, and his tireless zeal in serving her, had pleased and touched Laura.

Now she boldly told herself that she loved him, that her nature had finally attained the highest development, a great passion, before whose elementary power no obstacle could stand. Would any one venture to oppose its demands? Nothing

seemed to her worthy of consideration except Hartwang's suffering; she cared neither for his disapproval nor his remonstrances.

The world?

It would believe that she had chosen this strange husband in order to astonish it and to maintain her reputation for being eccentric, widely different from the average members of her sex. Let it please itself with this belief. She had released herself long ago from all desire for its approval, and knew that she was free from any such vain, idle wish.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER blinding glare of light illumined the dim tent, followed by a peal of thunder and a violent gust of wind which shook the canvas walls. Traut uttered a low cry, Frau Helene sprang up, and even Laura started, saying to herself that the decision which she must make was as tremendous as the battle of the elements.

She, too, now sank thoughtfully upon her couch and sat with her head propped upon her hands, gazing fixedly at the floor. Many an incident of her past life rose before her, each strengthening her conviction that the desire to attract attention had always been remote from her thoughts. Finally she remembered how once in Paris, in the Bois de Boulogne, an Indian rajah, with a turban on his dark head, had driven by her. A beautiful blonde, leaning back upon the satin cushions of the elegant carriage at his side, met with careless unconcern the stares

of the crowd whose attention was attracted by the couple. Laura had felt deeply abashed for this young and charming woman, and imagined how disagreeable it would be to go through life as an object of universal attention, for she was then a very young girl, and supposed the rajah's companion to be his wife.

The Indian's delicately chiselled features had aroused her admiration, and she now remembered having told her brother, who was with her, that if she loved him and he was one of the principal men among his people, she would not hesitate to marry such a foreigner, only first he must promise not to make her conspicuous.

"Desdemona," replied Werner, "imposed no such condition upon her Moor, and you would omit it, too, if you loved your Indian as she did Othello."

Now, that brown-skinned son of the East was to become another dark-hued Oriental, from the Buddhist must be evolved a Mohammedan. Werner would have given his consent less willingly, for the naked theism of Islam repelled him. Laura, too, was averse to it; but Faragalla by no means slavishly submitted to the precepts of his religion, and she had often seen him gaze

thoughtfully into vacancy for hours, in order, it seemed to her, to guide his mind into the right direction. But if she had deceived herself, and, when the fire of passion began to burn with a less ardent glow, she could find no bond that united her firmly to him in spirit, why then, then . . . The ancients had recognized as a privilege man possessed above the immortal gods the power of fixing an end to life. Even though she were compelled to use this privilege, she would, at least, have enjoyed for a brief time those moments in Paradise which, the poet says, are not too dearly purchased with death. Peter's lukewarm love had never offered her such happiness. True, before he rejected her conditions, she had been attached, tenderly attached, to him. She felt the blood mount into her cheeks at the remembrance of that harsh rebuff. She need fear nothing of that sort from Faragalla. His devotion was great enough to induce him to sacrifice everything to win her, even the foolish delusion of man's supremacy over woman. Her entreaty, nay, her mere sign, had the weight of a command. How often already he had yielded to her will without resistance!

Here she hesitated and, assailed by painful

anxiety, suddenly pressed her hand upon her heart. Again, though only in imagination, she saw the picture which the flash of lightning had just showed her, and at the same instant the thought forced itself upon her as if a stranger's voice had spoken: "Peter met the Bedouin's angry opposition with conciliating gentleness, but he resigned the woman to whom he had given his whole heart rather than yield to her conditions." Was not this the right course, worthy the dignity of a genuine man?

With increasing anxiety she asked herself whether she could really so confidently expect to pass through life unharmed with a man who possessed so little control over his own temper, and was ready to yield to all her caprices? She clenched her white teeth angrily; for it seemed as if Peter Hartwang was raising a warning finger to answer with a superior smile: "No, my dear friend, no; certainly not."

Laura clenched her little hand defiantly. Hitherto she had always managed to execute whatever she really desired. She possessed a clever brain, and was no novice in life. Mere obstacles were to be conquered, the might of her

love must aid. Besides, Faragalla would admire everything connected with her, even her faults.

Yet, in spite of this secret longing, she distrusted the voice that pleaded in favor of the man with whom she intended to form a life union. But she would not listen to the warning. On the contrary, she would reject as idle self-torture everything that thwarted the wish from whose fulfilment she anticipated a peerless happiness.

Never had she made a more momentous decision. Yet how difficult it was to found a home independently, uninfluenced by any stranger's power, any stranger's will, guided solely by her own and the person's who, she intended, should be her second self! What she expected of the future, what she had longed for in many a quiet hour during her long rides through the silent desert, now forced itself irresistibly upon her deeply excited mind.

The castle on Mt. Lebanon, which she meant to erect upon the almost shapeless ruins left by the Crusaders, appeared before her as the abode of a peerless love-happiness wholly beyond the reach of the world. Beneath its roof, in Faragalla's companionship, the long-desired exquisite

living out her own nature should bloom for her. In the blissful solitude shared only with Love, she might, like the eagle, soar near the sky in perfect freedom. The delight of witnessing the superior strength and skill of the man she loved, in the saddle on the finest horses, in hunting, and in climbing the rocky summit of Lebanon, and the still greater joy of waking his susceptible soul and drawing it up to her own height, she now once more enjoyed in anticipation. And what a rapturous existence to be worshipped by a beloved one as the goddess of happiness, placed, as it were, upon an altar by his devotion and gratitude and cherished with the utmost tenderness!

She saw herself fused by the fire of passion into one being with Faragalla, as Isolde, after her flight from the palace of her husband, King Mark, dwelt in the forest-house with Tristan. She might have learned from this heroine of legend that no remorse for her own act, no spies and persecutors could disturb her, the free woman, in her blissful repose.

Oh, and the pine-wood, the bubbling springs, and the snow-capped mountains in the distance during the reign of spring and summer; the

wainscoted hall with the Damascus rugs, the works of art from her German home, and the huge marble chimney-piece, on whose hearth the bright, warm blaze of the big olive logs was to diffuse comfort while the brief winter held sway! There the giraffe, lion, and panther skins obtained in Central Africa were to be spread over the cushions on which, leaning upon Faragalla's breast, she imagined herself the teacher and him the pupil.

Would not poets bear the tidings, from generation to generation, far into the future, of the love-life in that enchanted castle on Mt. Lebanon? Had any mortal before her, among the Crusaders, ever succeeded in arranging an existence so independent of every external influence, assumed such absolute control of her own destiny, secured an existence for which even the happy gods might envy her?

Laura's cheeks glowed hotly at this play of her excited imagination, this view of a happiness so close at hand, to whose gates she held the key.

Never had the future appeared before her in such fairylike magnificence. The sun of the Orient poured full floods of glory, the radiant stars in the blue firmament shed all the magical

splendor of Eastern nights upon the home of her future happiness. Never had the snow-capped summit of Mt. Lebanon towered so near the sky, the mountain streams flowed down into the valley with so silvery a ripple, or the dense boughs of the pine-trees in the grove diffused such a cooling shade as in her imagination at this hour.

While the thunder was pealing and the black clouds were pouring streams of lukewarm water upon the tent, Laura fancied that she heard the nightingales singing in the laurel and myrtle boughs of the shrubbery growing around the ruins, which the next year would see transformed into a stately little castle.

She desired to have erected on this site, with a few slight changes, a copy of a manor in the Norman style of architecture which she had seen in England. She beheld it distinctly before her as if it had been finished long ago, with stately battlements and waving banners, a gray-bearded porter at the door, and beautiful Arabian horses in the lofty vaulted stable.

These fairy visions, which a wave of her hand could realize, for a long time crowded every

scruple into the background. She feasted on them at first like present happiness, then like the bridegroom who, longing for his distant love, remembers her kiss and smile.

The sunny expression which had transfigured her face gradually vanished, and as Hartwang's deep voice, issuing orders to some one outside, fell upon her ear, she started, wiped the perspiration from her brow, and listened with a throbbing heart to the sounds that penetrated the sultry night air without. A noise, which could have nothing to do with the raging of the elements, blended with the rush of the pouring rain, and she soon discovered that people were digging in the ground with axes and shovels close beside the tent. A channel was being made to carry off the water, that it might not flood the desert-house still more. The work was successful. Peter had directed it, the Bedouins merely executed what his quiet solicitude had devised. For a moment Laura felt grateful, then it vexed her that, in spite of her resolute rebuff, he ventured to force himself upon her. She would stop him. But she quickly relinquished this intention, whose execution would have been not only ungrateful,

but contemptible. Besides, she ought to rejoice to know that she was guarded by his faithful care.

The work stopped fifteen minutes after—at least not the faintest noise betrayed that people were laboring near her. She heard nothing except the monotonous rushing of the rain, which still poured with undiminished violence upon the tent, and sometimes a more distant peal of thunder or the howling of a gust of wind.

The other two women had also been waked by the noise of the shovelling. Then they stretched themselves on their beds again, and Laura heard them breathing heavily in sleep, while she herself rested her head on her pillows and, half sitting, half lying, gave herself up once more to her thoughts. The magic world that had held her captive had melted away, and her mind, trained to reflection, speedily conquered her dreams and wishes. What if the happiness which she anticipated from a union with the Bedouin should not be enduring, and she were forced to turn from it?

At first she angrily rejected this fear.

How could it take possession of her on the eve of the fulfilment of the ardent desire of her soul, and after such sweet dreams? But her busy

brain could not be silenced, and she was forced to admit that the frustration of the venture on which she had resolved would be like flight after a battle shamefully lost. Even the solitude, in which she always found peace, consolation, and exaltation, would deny its blessing; for it is one of its greatest advantages that it permits us to perceive everything which is passing around and within us, enables us to survey what the immediate future may bring, and what the past offered. It was because Laura could consider all these things gladly, with no remorseful thought, that solitude had been so delightful. But if, after poisoning the present by her own fault, she desired to cling to the past, solitude would then contain—she was certain of it—cheerless desolation of the heart and the poisonous flower that grows from the ruins of crushed hopes—despair. A slight chill ran through her blood, and, angered and troubled by her own self-torturing nature, which once more so basely destroyed her pleasant anticipation of approaching happiness, she pressed her face more closely against the pillow. She felt, with greater despondency than ever before, how difficult it was for her, relying solely upon herself, to maintain a happiness erected by

her own strength. The higher powers, which the multitude trusted, and in which the slavish religions which held them captive taught them to believe, in order to keep them in a state of obedience and intellectual bondage, had no existence to the Over Man and, therefore, to her. Beside the death-beds of those whom she had most dearly loved, she had perceived their powerlessness or, still worse, their cruelty. Full of longing, she felt her great need of counsel, but to whom should she apply?

She could no longer appeal, without exposing herself to the most shameful humiliation, to the person whose aid she had never sought in vain, and who knew whether the pain she must inflict upon him the next day might not induce him to sever every tie between them. Yet, no! Whatever might befall her, he would surely come if she stretched out a beseeching hand. Drifting in this anxious mood to the borderland of slumber, Hartwang's image stood before her with great distinctness. She fancied that she saw him in a long white robe, similar to the one in which the lightning flash had just showed her Fargalla. The surgeon always wore such a garment at his work. Now she saw him beside her

brother's couch of pain. How sharply he had noted the most trivial thing, what deep feeling had glowed in his blue eyes! And once afterward, when she had visited him in the great hospital of which he had charge, to witness a distribution of Christmas gifts in the children's ward which he had planned, with what affectionate glances and gestures the little patients greeted him when he entered!

Laura remembered the little lame girl and the fair-haired boy with a bandage around his pretty curling locks who had gone to meet him, each carrying a little bunch of the simplest flowers. It seemed as if she could hear the little girl, whose fellow-sufferers had made her their representative, repeat her bit of poetry, and see Peter, with a surgeon's careful touch, lift the child and kiss her cheeks and brow. He had told her long before that his work in this ward afforded him the purest pleasure, and his special favorites were those whose cure had given him the hardest labor and the greatest anxiety. But when he saw the crushed flowers lift their heads brightly again, the little ones already touched by the hand of Death once more look out joyously into the world, he was as grateful to

them as if they had been the givers and he the receiver. He was, indeed, greatly indebted to them; for toward no others did he feel more deeply the joy-bestowing, rescuing power of his knowledge. Laura had never seen him more charming, gayer, or more gentle than on that Christmas evening during the distribution of gifts to the sick children, and at that time the new philosophy, of which at first she had only a superficial knowledge, had seemed exaggerated and unacceptable.

If just before, while gazing into the future, the magic of the Orient had flooded the happiness for which she longed, now, in gazing back into the past, the heart-warming consecration of the German Christmas season diffused itself through her quiet thoughts and dreams. Thunder and wind, the little castle on Mt. Lebanon, and Fargalla were completely banished from her imagination by memories of the sweetest hours of her childhood. While the thunder, still rolling heavily in the distance, reached her sense of hearing, she fancied she heard the Christmas songs of the children and Peter's deep voice. He turned toward her, but she could no longer follow his words, for slumber was beginning to close her

weary eyes. Dreaming took the place of quiet reflection and retrospect, but the visions it summoned before her eyes were closely associated with those recalled by memory.

She saw herself, after the Christmas gifts had been distributed in the children's ward, enter the street with Peter Hartwang. Leaning on his arm in an exalted mood, she felt the consciousness of happiness which, after the deaths of her parents and her brother, she had believed forever lost, once more awake. She readily confessed how much the evening had benefited her, and told Peter how she sympathized with his affection for the poor little ones. Everything had been exactly according to her own heart, with one exception. She had not forgotten how much pleasure she herself had once experienced in thinking of the Christ Child, and what affection she felt for him. But now she wondered whether it was not time to give up this deception which offended the truth-seeking of the new, progressive generation. At any rate, it seemed to her more just and honorable to let the children reward with love and gratitude for their kindness those from whom they really received the gifts that made them happy, rather than waste these beautiful

feelings upon a vision of the imagination, however lovely it might be and however worthy of reverence time had rendered it to many.

She said this in her sleep, exactly as the words had rushed from her lips on that bygone Christmas eve, and the dream permitted her also to contend against Hartwang's quiet opposition with the assurance that, in this case, it would make the children far happier if they knew that they owed their Christmas joys to him, their friend and benefactor, whom they loved, could gaze affectionately into his eyes and clasp his hand, rather than to a Child Jesus whom they did not know, especially as it was contrary to the little one's experience that a child could distribute gifts according to its own judgment and choice, instead of receiving presents and being guided. The human race was reaching maturity. Already the child had a right to ask that it should no longer be deceived by the old delusions, but made familiar, from the first, with the real life of the present.

But here the dream began to diverge from the actual experiences of the past; for though, during that walk home, there had been an exchange of differing opinions whose continuation afterward

caused a fatal breach and drove Laura from her home into distant foreign lands, on that evening Peter and she had parted from each other with their old cordial friendship.

The dream gave this conversation a less quiet end; for after Peter had represented to the woman he loved what an exquisite transfiguration a portion of her own, her dead brother's, and his life had gained by the devout childish belief in the Christmas festival, and how the greatest joys of children did not come from the world of reality, but from the kingdom of imagination, which opened so much more widely to them than to grown persons, it was difficult for Laura to find an appropriate answer. But she now dropped quiet demonstration and gave him commonplaces from the writings of her favorite normal man, which seemed paradoxical even to herself, and of which, therefore, she felt ashamed; but in her dream Peter opposed her with a fierce vehemence which had never been displayed in reality. The mature man, who never lost his calm self-control, had become a frantic lunatic who gave free rein to the wrath which filled him. The dream had transported her to his study, where all sorts of instruments stood on open shelves, and the rest

of the wall space was covered with long book-cases. But while, frenzied by rage, he shouted that a woman who raised her sacrilegious hands against the holiest things, in order to make a show of her feeble strength, was an object of loathing, concerning whom his sole desire was to banish her from his presence, he tore glasses, books, and bottles from their places, hurling them upon the floor with such violence that the flying fragments glittered and flashed brightly, while the crashing and rattling of the shattered articles, mingled with the thunder of his deep voice, fairly deafened her. At the same time it seemed as though Peter's mad conduct was dragging the world out of its usual course—she felt the earth tremble under her feet and everything reel around her. Seized with sudden terror, she looked for aid, and not in vain, for instantly, she knew not whence he came, Faragalla stood beside her, clasped her with his left arm, and tore from its sheath the crooked scimitar which she had given him in Damascus. The whites of his eyes gleamed in horrible contrast to his dark face, which was distorted by furious rage.

Scarcely conscious what she was doing in her fright, she clutched his arm, to prevent his rush-

ing upon Hartwang; for she now clearly realized how dear the friend of her childhood was to her, in spite of his mad outburst of anger; and, besides, before her, as if she had risen from the earth, stood her dead mother, gazing at the Bedouin with cold contempt and into her face with stern reproof. Then it seemed as if her strength failed, and while vainly struggling to rush toward the beloved one, to beseech her to listen before she withdrew her love from her child, a terrible uproar arose around her. The roof and walls of the room fell in, the books and instruments rattled and crashed upon the floor, and whizzing stones struck her on the forehead and shoulder. Seized with acute pain, she wished to fly from a weakness wholly new to her, and all sorts of objects whose nature she did not recognize pressed upon her and held her fast, preventing the possibility of moving. Meanwhile, it seemed as if the tempest was blowing dark clouds of smoke toward her from the chimney of her father's factory. Almost stifling, she tried to call for help, but her voice failed, and, seized by a death-like chill, tortured by a sharp pain in her eye and arm, she struggled convulsively for breath till her senses failed.

CHAPTER IX.

A FIERCE blast had been really blowing eastward for some time from the sea. While scattering the thick clouds from the sky, it had swept howling and roaring over the desert, tearing from the ground everything that stood in its way. The tent occupied by the women had also been struck by its terrible power and forced far over on one side. Thanks to the heavily weighted pegs, it had endured three violent attacks. At the fourth what had hitherto saved it from falling proved a misfortune; for the central pole was not only thrown to the ground, as would probably have happened in any case, but bent so violently that it snapped and dragged down with it all it had supported.

When Laura saw the Bedouin and Hartwang by the flash of lightning, Faragalla had been angrily contradicting the stranger because he

pointed out the danger which might result to the tent from weighting the ropes. What had happened proved that Peter's calm judgment had been justified when he disapproved of the Bedouin's measure.

Old Traut had been roused by the howling of the tempest, and, without disturbing her mistress's slumbers, she sat upright on the side of her bed.

Frau Helene had dreamed that the ship which bore her was overtaken near the harbor by a hurricane, and did not wake until the canvas and ropes came falling upon her and the maid's loud screams reached her ears.

Laura was not permitted to return to life so quickly. The broken pole had severely wounded her, and the heavy upper portion of the tent rested heavily upon her body. When the storm burst, the old dragoman went near the canvas structure, followed by Faragalla and Hartwang. It was still dark, but the approach of dawn was already visible in the dim twilight appearing above the peaks of the Bird Mountains. Unperceived by the women, the men, standing close beside the tent, had tried to prop it with their hands. Perhaps, in spite of the assaults of the

gale, they might have succeeded had it not been for the breaking of the pole.

But the desert-house had scarcely collapsed when a goodly number of brown hands, and among them Hartwang's white ones, were toiling energetically to bring its occupants into the light of day.

The German ordered the Tawara to move back, directed Faragalla, the Bedouin sheik, and the two dragomans where to take a careful hold, and meanwhile worked busily himself.

But though he tore away the ruins of the tent with all his strength, he could not help smiling as Traut, whose bed had been placed close beside the door, struggled with loud screams from under the canvas that covered her. Frau Helene, who, soon after, did the same, was deadly pale and, trembling with terror, could not force her white lips to utter a sound.

How would he find Laura?

The blood crimsoned Hartwang's cheeks and brow at the thought, and with passionate haste, yet anxious prudence, he tore aside the portion of the wall of the tent which he grasped in his hand. Just at that moment the odor of scorched wool reached him. Traut, too, rushed up to him,

screaming frantically: "Oh, the lantern! If the table-cover caught fire when it fell . . . Merciful Heaven! . . . Fräulein, Fräulein! . . . My poor dear child! . . . Laura, dear, dear Laura, where are you?"

Mortal terror seized upon the brave man, too, for the glimmering edge of some woven material shone in the dim light of dawn from the wet mass of canvas. If the girl could not be brought out soon, she would stifle. Like a madman, he dragged aside weights which ordinarily would have been far beyond his strength; but Faragalla also perceived his "mistress's" danger, and with no less power and swiftness than the German's tore and hauled aside the ruins of the tent in another place. Suddenly a cry so piercing, so frantic, escaped his lips that Hartwang was startled. But before he could determine whether the Bedouin's exclamation had expressed cruel anguish or the greatest rapture, he saw him drag the missing girl from beneath the materials which concealed her.

While Peter was vainly trying to release himself from the loose ropes in which his feet were tangled, and finally cut them with his hunting-knife, Faragalla had raised the wounded figure.

in his strong arms. She submitted without resistance, and while the Bedouin, rejoicing in his act of rescue, gazed into her face, over which the blood was streaming, she opened her eyes, looking with anxious wonder at the man in whose arms she lay. Then she recognized him, and as Faragalla saw her glance brighten, he returned the look with all the fervent devotion his black eyes could convey. For one brief moment the pleasure of being so ardently beloved was dominant, then her senses failed, and through the roar of the tempest Hartwang's voice rose, ordering Frau Helene's uninjured bed to be prepared.

The Bedouin made no resistance when the German gentleman took the wounded girl from his arms and laid her on the couch which had been brought out.

The blood she had lost, the expression of pain upon her lips, and the position of the left arm had alarmed the surgeon; but after the first examination he looked relieved, for she was alive and, in spite of the flow of blood, her pulse was not very weak. True, it was not yet possible to judge the nature of her wounds, but he perceived that the hostile elements which had done the mischief had also been of service to the

wounded girl. But for the recent cloud-burst the air would now be filled with stifling dust, and only the drenching of the tent had prevented the flames of the burning table-cloth, caused by the overturned lantern, from extending farther. The sole painful thought was that Faragalla, not he, had brought her back to the light of day.

When, with the aid of the women, he had laid Laura on the couch, he sent the Bedouin to obtain, if possible, a vessel on which the sufferer could be conveyed to Suez. The eastern horizon was already dyed with the glowing splendor of sunrise, and the wind was clearing the black clouds from the sky, whose azure vault arched above the wilderness, and when His Majesty the Sun, in his dazzling diadem of rays, calmly began his daily pilgrimage from the mountain summits at the east, the surgeon had reached the conviction that, though his task was difficult, he could scarcely fail to do for his wounded love what he had already accomplished for many a more severely injured stranger.

There was no time to lose, and the gale which had threatened to be a serious obstacle subsided as the sun began to mount higher.

He carefully arranged the walls of the over-

turned tent, to protect Laura's couch while he thoroughly examined her. Traut and Frau Helene aided him, anxiously watching every change in his expression, for they had seen that he regarded the wound near the right eye as by no means trivial. The left shoulder, too, was injured, but this appeared to be of slight importance.

Meanwhile, his dragoman had brought the leather satchel in which he kept his bandages and surgical instruments. He needed both, for a splinter was to be removed from the wound, and the use of the probe proved that an operation, which would be neither easy nor without peril, was inevitable. He lacked many things, it is true, and most earnestly hoped that Faragalla and the Tawara who accompanied him might succeed in finding a vessel, and thereby avoid the necessity of transporting the invalid by land, which might be as harmful as to remain in this unprotected spot in the desert, exposed to every ray of sunshine.

While making his preparations for any emergency, and having his own tent pitched on the site of the one which had been overthrown, Frau

Helene offered her services for every kind of assistance. She was a trained nurse, and could endure the sight of the most serious wounds.

The surgeon looked intently into the face of the delicate woman, and read in the thin lips and the expression of her eyes such resolute will that he told her his greatest need was a reliable assistant. If she could take the place of one, he would use the knife at once. Every quarter of an hour lost might be injurious, and the matter at stake was the sight of one who was dear to him and, if he judged her correctly, not wholly indifferent to her.

"You can rely upon me," the widow answered resolutely, and Hartwang felt that he might do so. He at once had Laura carried into his tent, which, meanwhile, had been pitched, and then set to work. The great loss of blood made the sufferer still unconscious, and he did nothing to revive her.

His feminine assistant watched every movement, and when he began to use his instruments, she swiftly obeyed every signal with thorough understanding and readiness. Traut, with tears in her eyes, often unable to repress a faint sob,

helped both. The sun was still striking the tent with slanting rays when the surgeon, drawing a long breath, laid down his instruments.

The operation seemed to be successful. There lay the terrible splinter. Traut turned shuddering away, while Hartwang told Frau Helene that he hoped he had cleansed the wound thoroughly from all foreign substances, but he could not be absolutely sure of it. He dared not venture to insert the probe and pincers more deeply, so they must wait for the progress of the cure. If any particle of wood remained at the bottom of the wound, it would depend upon what way Nature ejected it. But whatever happened, he believed that, by careful watching, the worst might be averted.

It had required very little assistance to keep Laura in a state of stupor during the operation. Even after it was completed she only moaned faintly and gazed into vacancy, but the surgeon had ascertained that her brain was uninjured. The later she fully realized her condition the better. She now needed two things which could not be obtained here—absolute rest and ice.

Both could be had in Suez, and, to his delight, soon after he had applied the bandages and

strengthened the patient with port wine, Faragalla returned, bringing the news that he had found a boat which could be hired for the voyage.

After making the necessary preparations, Hartwang rode to the sea to arrange with the officials who, for the sake of a large backsheesh, were ready to render any service; and an hour after Laura could be removed to the vessel, which belonged to the Egyptian customs service, and had room enough to accommodate the sufferer's companions. The Tawara carried the sick girl's carefully shaded couch with the utmost caution and placed it on the deck which Peter, with the dragoman's assistance, had sheltered from the rays of the sun by an awning which, though simple in construction, answered its purpose admirably. The wind was favorable, and just after nightfall the vessel anchored in Suez, near the great Suez hotel.

CHAPTER X.

NEARLY three weeks had passed; Laura was lying on a divan in a darkened room, with a green shade over the eyes whose sight she had so narrowly escaped losing. Frau Helene devoted herself with the utmost unselfishness to nursing her employer—Traut was unable during the time of the most serious danger to assist her, because she was confined to her bed by a slight inflammation of the lungs, caught during the night of the storm, and now, with twofold zeal, aided in the care of the convalescent.

Laura was free from fever and needed nothing but quiet, which she by no means lacked in the airy apartments which had been assigned to her. They overlooked the sea and were a long distance from the open courtyard in the centre of the square building, the favorite resort of the occupants of the hotel, because one side was well

shaded during every part of the day. Here were plenty of comfortable chairs and couches made of cane and bamboo, as well as linen awnings to shut out the dazzling sunlight. Before the loungers stood small tables, on which were books, newspapers, and the cooling drinks so much enjoyed during the hot April days. The gentlemen stretched themselves out in more comfortable attitudes than would have been seemly in Europe, and seemed to feel very much at ease in the thin white garments of the South; the ladies had taken from their trunks summer dresses, many of which had come from well-known modistes in Paris, London, and New York, and used their fans continually while talking with their masculine travelling companions with the absence of constraint to which persons so easily accustom themselves in the tropics. After the arrival of each of the great steamers from India, a perfect flood of people, principally citizens of the British Empire, poured its waves into this courtyard.

Men and women of all ages and every shade of complexion then became the goal of curiosity for the older inmates of the hotel who, in the bath and dressing-room, had already made themselves presentable.

There were few among them who offered a pleasing appearance; for only an occasional individual in the throng of somewhat dilapidated arrivals appeared familiar with drawing-rooms, or even suited to present an attractive figure in the bamboo chairs in this courtyard.

There were always some gentlemen, who looked like English officers in civilians' dress, or ladies in airy white costumes, that greeted one or other of the new guests very cordially as an old acquaintance. But the handshaking was quickly ended. The older occupants did not wish to use the time the others needed to restore the outer man to seemliness, and the newcomers longed for everything which the eyes of the guests in the bamboo chairs appeared to deny them. They would sit among them that very evening, and subject other new arrivals to the same criticism they were now compelled to undergo.

The reclining figures scarcely vouchsafed a glance to those who did not belong to European society. The dark-skinned guests in Oriental costume were not regarded as within the pale of daily intercourse. Yet they were quite numerous—Japanese, Chinese, Malays, black and brown sons

of Africa with the flat noses of the Bantu negroes, and the clear-cut faces of the other "handsome races" of the dark quarter of the earth. There were also many Egyptians in European dress, but with the tarboosh on their heads, Syrians and Bedouins in the costumes of their home and tribe, but only a few favored ones ventured to take seats in the bamboo chairs. Yet even here Sheik Faragalla, who was still among Laura's companions, enjoyed a certain degree of distinction. Women's eyes were especially attracted—nay, he had already brought more than one sketch-book and many a brush and pencil into requisition as he stood, often for more than an hour, apparently absorbed in thought, leaning against the same pillar at the northern corner of the courtyard.

Diagonally opposite to him lounged a party of English aristocrats, who had come from India on their own yacht, and were waiting in the comfortable Suez hotel for some repairs to be made. Several gentlemen had gathered around Lady Westmore and her little daughter. The former had noticed the Bedouin, and was assuring young Lord Harley, who had been hunting elephants in Ceylon and tigers in India,

that she had not seen a more magnificent specimen of his race, even in the heart of the desert. He must be one of the most aristocratic sheiks of his tribe—that was apparent from his bearing and costume, the latter did not lack the slightest detail which characterized Bedouin attire. “He might be pictured in any book of costumes exactly as he walks and stands,” she protested.

Mr. Solly, a wealthy man of good family, who had gained a considerable reputation as an Arabist, added importantly: “We have an accurate description of the appearance of the saint, Saijid Achmed el Bedawi. Now look at yonder Bedouin’s face. Exactly like the saint’s: large, deep black eyes, a prominent aquiline nose, a light brown forehead. Recall, too, the white facecloths, which framed this man’s large features. Might not yonder young sheik have stood for the model of this picture? I drew him into conversation. It was a real feast to the ear after being compelled to be content a whole winter with the vulgar Arabic of the cities. The sand of the desert, which preserved the mummies and papyrus rolls from destruction, has also guarded the pure Arabic of early days.”

“Like their morals and customs,” added Rev.

Mr. Brown, who filled the place of chaplain on Lady Westmore's yacht. "Not an iota has changed since Ammianus Marcellinus's description of them."

"There were undoubtedly dandies among the sons of the desert in those days," Lord Harley remarked, and Lady Westmore replied: "Yonder sheik is evidently a beau in his tribe, as Alcibiades was among the Athenians."

"And Lord Harry among our young men," cried little Maud, laughing.

"Saucy child!" exclaimed the mother, shaking her fan reprovingly at her; but the young nobleman thanked her for her complimentary opinion of his person, and the Arabist declared that Lady Westmore was right, for he had never seen a Bedouin who so well deserved the name of "dandy" as this Faragalla.

"Faragalla?" asked the English woman, evidently pleased with the harmony of the name, for she repeated it two or three times, as Laura so often did. "Bring this Fairy Prince to me."

"With pleasure," replied the Arabist. "I heard that he had accompanied a German lady, who is now ill here, through the desert."

"A dragoman!" exclaimed Lady Westmore

in a disappointed tone, her lips curling with an expression of contempt.

"No, no!" Mr. Solly answered eagerly. "He does not belong to Egypt. He went with the lady as a protector to Palmyra, through Mesopotamia, and even to Petræa . . ."

"As a protector to Petræa!" she repeated in astonishment. "Is his employer old or young?"

"There, I regret to say, I am ignorant," replied the scientist.

"Young, and either cursed or blessed with remarkable beauty," answered the chaplain.

"A knowledge that doubtless arises solely from anxiety for the salvation of the suffering girl," commented Lady Westmore, smiling. "As a rule, German women are too pedantic to please me, but a lady who is said to be young and pretty, and who ventured under the direction of so experienced a protector . . . I have long desired to go to Petræa . . ."

"To Petræa!" cried little Maud, interrupting her mother, and clapping her hands in delight. "An adventure, a real adventure, Lord Harry! You see how mamma fulfils my boldest wishes! You won't be behind her in generosity, but accompany us as a protector."

"With the greatest pleasure," replied the young nobleman, "but your mother has already found a reliable escort."

"Yet it would seem to me more than doubtful . . ." began Mr. Solly, when Lady Westmore interrupted him by exclaiming:

"What was dangerous four years ago is far less so now. Surely you heard that I have long desired to see the old nest of rocks, and that settles the matter. What the German risked I think I need not give up. You will make me acquainted with her, Mr. Brown?"

"I?" asked the chaplain in surprise. "I have no more knowledge of the lady than of the man in the moon, and, besides, I don't understand a word of German."

"The hero of Petraea, at any rate, speaks English," she answered eagerly, "and whoever told you that she is young and beautiful . . ."

"Lord Harley is my authority," interrupted the clergyman; but the tiger-hunter answered quietly. "And mine is the worthy dragoman Achmed, who, in the great migration of the Harley tribe two years ago, to give an air of respectability to the family, guided us all—father, mother, sisters, and Aunt Judith—up the Nile."

"What did you hear from the man?" asked Lady Westmore, whose contempt for the Nubian's class appeared to have lessened rapidly.

"The most interesting things, by Jove, that my ears have heard since the last roar of a royal tiger," answered the young nobleman. "If I did not think discretion imposed silence upon me, I could entertain you until dinner-time with the German lady, her adventures on her journey, her companions, occupations, sufferings, tastes, and wanderings."

Lady Westmore turned the tiny watch that hung from a bow set with diamonds fastened on the bosom of her dress, and sighed: "Dinner in three-quarters of an hour, and here I sit like Cinderella . . ."

"*After* the marriage with the Fairy Prince," cried Mr. Solly, laughing.

"Yet greatly in need of a metamorphosis," she retorted. "The other ladies went away long ago; but—adventures, sufferings, wanderings. . . Quick, quick, Lord Harry! Just a sketch. You are master of the art of drawing distinct pictures with a few sharp strokes. Give them to us now as oysters before the soup. What a dragoman

tells is common property, and has nothing to do with discretion."

The young nobleman let his tall figure drop into the bamboo chair opposite to his curious countrywoman, and began: "Such an entreaty, Lady Catherine, would force even a Trappist to break his vow of silence. So listen. Simoons, whirlwinds, cloud-bursts, lightnings, all slaying pitilessly—the young lady's tent too!"

"Slaying, your lordship?" asked Mr. Solly. "That is usually applied only to living creatures."

"This tent was one," answered the other unconcernedly, "if the pearl is part of the shell which contains it, and the shell belongs to living beings, and the German lady . . ."

"Is young and beautiful we already know," interrupted Lady Westmore.

"Both," Lord Harry asserted with almost solemn earnestness. "One of the houris of Paradise—she is said to use the well-known green veil—so Achmed calls her. But the pitiless tent—it certainly lacks a sensitive soul—fell upon her, not only at her feet, but like a beast of prey bent on murder. So it inflicted severe wounds on the head and shoulder. Whole streams of noble

virgin blood wet the sands of the desert. I suppose that roses will grow from them later. I'll ask Sir Arbiter, who sets out to-morrow for Sinai, to see whether the miracle does not really happen. Besides, there was fire from heaven. A flash of lightning had probably struck the tent before it fell. It was burning. Flames and dense smoke whirled around. The howling gale fanned the fire and drove the smoke before it. The beautiful victim of these horrors lay bleeding, paralyzed, stifling. The flames had already caught the hem of her thin night-robe. Why do you stare at me so, Maud? I'm not telling fairytales, but as true a story as the most truth-loving person before me. I feel under obligation to use the utmost caution, yet I must stick to the point. The fire had already seized more than the hem of the night-robe and, buried under the ruins of the burning tent, stifling, in the most cruel meaning of the word, lay the young lady, while Death was stretching his hand to draw so much beauty, intellect, and courage into his dark domain. But a kind Providence was watching, though the tools used are often singular ones. In this case it sent no rescuing angel of light, but a brown-skinned barbarian."

"Faragalla?" asked Lady Westmore in surprise, glancing toward the pillar against which the stately son of the desert still leaned motionless.

"He and no other," was the reply. "With heroic fearlessness he rushed into the blazing tent, tore the stifling girl, who had already set the tips of her little feet upon the edge of Charon's boat, from the ruins, and carried her out into the wilderness."

"As in the drama by the German poet Lessing, 'Nathan the Wise,'" observed the chaplain. "Do you know it, Lady Westmore?"

"By chance, yes," she replied. "I have the good fortune to be receiving a second education from Maud's German governess, who is a perfect encyclopædia of knowledge."

"Say, rather," observed Mr. Solly, "that she is helping revive your first splendid education. It was a great error on my part not to suppose that you, who are the most tolerant of the tolerant, were familiar with this lofty hymn of toleration. But who would not have been reminded by Lord Harley's story of the Templar in the white cloak, who saved Recha from the fire?"

"I, sir," cried the nobleman, laughing, "be-

cause I know no more of the drama you mention than its author probably did of the lair in the rushes to which the tiger retires. So we have no cause to reproach each other. Yet your comparison seems a happy one. The Bedouin's bur-nous sufficiently resembles the Templar's white mantle. Which clasped the rescued fair one more closely to his breast, the brown Infidel or the fair Christian knight, may remain doubtful. When I imagine the situation very vividly, I reach the conclusion which, perhaps, may be credited to my youthful inexperience in these matters, that the Oriental fire burning in yonder fellow's black eyes surely led him to make the most of the favorable opportunity. Even you, Lady Catherine, would excuse the Bedouin Faragalla, if he . . ."

"The toleration of 'the most tolerant of all tolerant people' does not yet extend so far," Lady Westmore here interrupted the tiger-slayer. "And let me tell you, Harry, you must keep the visions of your imagination carefully to yourself, unless you want . . ."

"Go, Maud, my pet, and see if the letters have come."

She turned as she spoke to her pretty little daughter, who, sitting on a low stool at her feet, had kept her large blue eyes fixed intently upon the young nobleman's face while he told his story. The child was trained to obedience. Tossing aside, with a swift movement of the head, the long, fair locks that fell in light waves down her back, she rose quickly, glanced affectionately at Harry, then looked at her mother with a half-mischievous, half-reproachful expression, which plainly intimated that she knew very well why she was sent away. At the same time she kissed her hand to the young matron, though by mistake in the direction of the nobleman, and darted off across the courtyard, her golden hair, that floated behind her, glittering exquisitely in the slanting rays of the setting sun. Perhaps the child had anticipated this, for she avoided the nearer way through the shade and ran in the full light of the sun toward the opposite wing of the hotel.

"Coquette," murmured Professor Hartwang. Hidden by the huge pages of the *Times*, he had been a mute listener to the conversation, and the angry blood crimsoned his face.

These strangers were already associating Laura with the Bedouin, and he, Peter, did not even have the right to contradict them.

While he was using every remedy known to his skill to save the girl's endangered sight, many a token of warm gratitude had been bestowed upon him, thereby making the hope of winning her stir afresh in his heart, but the brown son of the desert had repeatedly baffled his desire to transform this hope into certainty. While after the voyage which so immediately followed the operation the wounded girl's temperature rose to a critical degree, and the illusions of fever ruled her clear brain, Laura had talked constantly of Faragalla. Sometimes she had seen him dashing toward her on horseback, sometimes she had imagined herself with him in a citadel on Mt. Lebanon, and, with tender gayety, called him her husband, sometimes she was possessed by the idea that the tent had again fallen upon her and the Bedouin was carrying her out of the stifling smoke into the storm.

Then she had tried with all her strength to tear herself from his arms, forbidding him, in tones of passionate impetuosity, to abuse his power over her. The girl had said little in her

delirious ravings of him, Hartwang, and it was with timid anxiety. This had troubled him, nay, he had felt it as an offence, though he often repeated to himself the remark of Laura's companion that the bond which united him to the sufferer was too healthful to find a place in the delusions of fever.

While little Lady Maud, in spite of the light yellow laced shoes, which must have pinched her pretty feet, raced across the courtyard nimbly enough, he could not help thinking of this comment. Yes, the bond that had united him to Laura was healthful, thoroughly sound, and what separated her from him was not. It grew from the exaggerations into which her highly endowed nature frequently led her. The strong wings of her restless intellect often carried her beyond the desired goal.

CHAPTER XI.

THE English child in the Suez hotel reminded Professor Hartwang of Laura's childhood. She, too, had been a beautiful little girl, and her mother had allowed her thick, fair locks to remain unbraided a long time; but how little she had valued the ornament—how often, when her tangled hair floated around her heated face in disorder, she had been stopped to smooth it!

And her blue eyes!

They had certainly been as large and brilliant as Maud's.

Entreaty is a child's right, and when she wanted to coax anything from him or her brother, she had understood how to urge her desire tenderly and earnestly enough with those eloquent eyes. The alluring glances which Maud had learned from coquettish women, perhaps even from her own mother, Laura had never used, even

in her childhood, and they had remained alien to her up to the present hour. Her blue eyes had early known how to test, examine, or sparkle brightly when anything stirred her intellect; but usually they had seemed to him like shining windows, through which were seen the mirror of a deep, pure lake.

To grasp and obtain what she believed her right had been the principal demands of her nature, and she had understood how to carry out what she desired obstinately enough. Often her course had appeared unseemly for one of her age and sex, but never unworthy of a pure nature.

In the opinion of her associates, her strong sense of independence and her obstinacy had led her to place too little value upon external as well as internal things, and the desire to please had been so foreign to her nature from childhood that her mother had tried to foster a certain degree of the feminine vanity whose existence is no virtue, yet whose lack is a defect in women. The pursuit of lovers, to which he saw other girls devote themselves with more or less zeal, she had been diverted from, even in early youth, by graver interests.

He disapproved, it is true, of the motives

which induced her to withdraw the affection that had once rendered him happy, yet her renunciation offended him less, because he knew that it was the mind, and not the heart, which occasioned the step. Besides, his personality had nothing to do with it, and no other man came between the two.

Hence, he had not experienced the torture of jealousy until he met her again in the desert, and saw more than once the tender glances with which she showed Faragalla a feeling far deeper than calm approval.

During the heyday of their love, Laura, in happy hours, had gazed into his own eyes with scarcely less warmth, and the memory was one of his most precious possessions.

Now her treatment of the Bedouin had robbed him of its best value, and whenever he thought of it, his blood boiled hotly in his veins. He could have endured her conduct much more easily, he thought, had his rival been a worthier one, but he had reached the conviction that Laura greatly overestimated the Arabian, and that the latter, in the pursuit of his profession of accompanying Europeans through the desert, had learned what pleased them, and thus understood

how to win their favor. Therefore, as soon as the injured girl's condition permitted him to do so, he advised her to dismiss the dragoman Achmed and the Bedouin, since they were of no service to her here and their stay in Suez caused her unnecessary expense; but Laura could not be persuaded to take this step. It was still uncertain where she should go after her recovery, she replied. Besides, the preserver of her life, who had given her a thousand proofs of self-sacrificing devotion, deserved different treatment from an ordinary hired guide. Perhaps she might go to Syria again, and, in that case, she would certainly be reluctant to lose her trustworthy old companion. Now that the season for Nile travel was over, Achmed would not ask a fortune to remain in her service. As to Faragalla, she wanted to talk with him herself. So Hartwang, though with extreme unwillingness, brought him to the bedside of the recovering girl. It was the first time that she had met him in the full possession of her senses since he held her in his arms. Blushing deeply, she extended her hand to him, permitted him to kiss the wide sleeve of her robe, and thanked him warmly for his deed of rescue. In reply to her question whether he would prefer

to return to his beloved desert-home or to stay with her, although she did not yet know where she might go within the next few weeks, he exclaimed in the most tender accents: "Oh, my mistress!" and added: "There is no other happiness for me than to serve you."

The blood again crimsoned her cheeks, and though the shade prevented Hartwang's seeing her eyes, he could not help believing that she was gazing at the Bedouin no less tenderly than she had done in the desert.

So the dragoman and the sheik remained in Suez. Laura was rich enough to indulge such whims, and Peter lacked any right to oppose her decision.

What had he to do here longer?

For several days he might have left the invalid to the care of the Suez physician, who, he knew, was a capable, well-informed man, and he longed to return home. True, the vacation which he had used for travelling was not yet over, and Laura's manner by no means compelled him to renounce the hope which had guided him to her in the desert—but she was no longer the same to him. The doubt concerning what might unite her to the Bedouin disturbed him night and day,

and the answers which he found in quiet meditation enraged him, and yet he was not strong enough to leave her unheard. So, in his frank manner, he had asked what the sheik, whom he thought unworthy of her preference—nay, even of her esteem—was to her, and thereby led her to make the no less frank answer—much, nay, far more than he suspected. Panting for breath in his struggle to repress his indignation, he left her; but when, the following morning, he returned to straighten the bandages, Laura received him with almost humble gentleness, and entreated him, if he still cared for her ever so little, not to turn the conversation to Faragalla again. He already knew that she owed her life to the Bedouin—what else the sheik had been to her he should learn. She was still too weak to look back steadily into the past and steer her life-bark with a firm hand into its future course. She could tell him but one thing now: she did not forget for a single moment her debt to him or the atonement that was his due.

Then she had been as gracious to him as if everything that had ever come between them were forgotten. Hope revived in Hartwang's heart and thrust far into the shade the displeasure

which had so long ruled him. He had obeyed her wish that he should not mention the Bedouin. Exquisite days in happy accord with Laura were granted him until Frau Helene chanced to inform him that her employer often spoke to her of Faragalla, and was pondering what gift she could bestow upon him for the preservation of her life. Sometimes she thought of a specially fine horse, sometimes a sabre with gems set in its hilt, sometimes a costly diamond ring. True, the widow asserted that she also talked of *him* with the utmost warmth, and liked to tell her of their youthful companionship, and the friendship which had united him to her distinguished brother; but neither these communications, the cordiality with which Laura received him, the eager pleasure she showed in conversation with him, nor the gratitude to which she gave frequent expression, soothed the torturing anxiety that took possession of his soul.

The struggle to obey the demands of her nature by going her own way had led her to bestow her love upon an adventurer, to whom nothing could attract her except the charm of the senses. It was undeniable that, during the long journey made in Faragalla's company, she

had at least coquetted with him. His own eyes had showed that. And what had the Bedouin been to her except a useful companion? What might be the confession she intended to make concerning it?

Even now, while he was living entirely for her and neglecting many an important task for her sake—nay, while she herself often seemed as if the drooping flower of her love for him might raise its head once more, Laura did not renounce this unworthy trifling.

He loved her ardently and loyally, but he desired to trust the woman to whom he gave his heart fully and entirely, and to hold her in the highest esteem. Now he feared that he could do so no longer. Yet Laura was not like other women. Who could penetrate what strange delusions might bind her, in her imagination, to the Bedouin? Before leaving her he desired to see clearly, to learn from her own lips what she was still withholding from him. Perhaps she was not quite strong enough for the confession she had resolved to make if he earnestly desired it. He did not expect to be deceived there. He knew her frank nature. The best plan would be to leave her a short time to recover, and when

the opportunity came to go on one of the Khedive's steamers with a pacha on whom he had performed a successful operation to Tūr-el-Bahr, where he could examine the coral reefs which had long interested him. Peter took advantage of it and parted from her for a week.

He had returned from this trip only a few hours ago.

When he wished to greet her, Laura had just gone into the bath. Now he had learned, through the conversation of the English guests, many things which increased his uneasiness. In the morning, and before sunset, Faragalla was said to stand under a palm-tree on the shore, gazing up at the windows of the beautiful German girl whose life he had saved. This statement was followed by jests that cut Peter to the heart. The Rev. Mr. Brown was very familiar with German literature, and made numerous quotations. Verses from Heine's poem of the Azra were translated into English, whereupon Mr. Solly expressed the hope that the son of the desert did not belong to the race whose sons die when they love, because Lady Catherine would thereby be robbed of the pleasure of making his acquaintance. But Hartwang, who had not yet

forgotten to feel united to Laura, and still considered himself her natural protector, was forced to restrain his wrath lest he should show his indignation to those who profited by the absurd conduct of a base man to amuse themselves at the girl's expense. Yet all this could not be purely imaginary. The Arabian's conduct must be stopped at any rate. Laura was too good to serve as a subject for amusement to idle loungers.

He walked hurriedly across the courtyard, while its walls echoed with the shrill clash of the tamtam, struck to summon the guests to dinner, and the slant rays of the setting sun were shedding a golden lustre on the yellow masonry. The pillar against which Faragalla had been leaning was empty. Was he again standing at his post opposite Laura's windows? He felt unwilling to ascertain, and he was also reluctant, in his present mood, to go to the hotel table. He had not yet taken a seat at it, but dined at noon, according to his custom at home. On the stairs he met a throng of guests, noisily obeying the summons of the tamtam.

Perfect silence reigned in the wing which Laura occupied. Heavy India mattings deadened the sound of footsteps, and the hotel ser-

vants glided as noiselessly as ghosts through the corridors and along the steps. It was to them that this portion of the house was indebted for its wonderful quiet. They were all East Indians, who, barefoot and without uttering a single unnecessary word, performed their duties with faultless punctiliousness. The costume of these beautiful, silent human beings consisted of a single long, light garment. Each brown face was most refined in its outlines, each well-shaped head was covered with shining black hair, and nothing neater could be imagined than these young men, who all seemed to have come directly from the bath. The keenest eye could not have detected the smallest spot on their light robes, and the features, the gaze, the movements of most of them made the impression, by their unvarying calmness, purity, and sobriety, that they had renounced the demands of the senses and were freed from every passionate emotion.

They belonged to the same family, had entered the service of the hotel in a body, and performed all the work there. One of these men, whom Hartwang had requested to announce him to Laura, hastened up the stairs, and before he had reached the end of the corridor in which the

convalescent's rooms were located, returned with the announcement that "Miss Vernissen would receive him."

Before Hartwang entered the anteroom, Traut came forward, with her finger on her lips, to warn him not to make his presence known yet. Peter saw that she had something important to tell him and encouraged her by a significant "Well?"

The old servant had waited eagerly for this moment. Her regard for the professor had increased since he cured her of the inflammation of the lungs contracted during that terrible night of tempest, and, besides, she felt that she shared two strong feelings with him—love for her mistress and aversion to the Bedouin, whom she hated and also despised ever since the dragoman had confided to her that, but for the senseless weighting of the pegs which the sheik had ordered, the tent would have fallen without injuring any one.

She had not yet been able to speak to Hartwang alone since his return, but now she instantly poured forth the indignation that filled her heart as, seizing his hand, she led him to the window of the little room and, in a voice whose hoarse-

ness remaining from the cold was increased by rage, whispered: "Look there, Herr Professor! Was such a thing ever heard of? Day after day that brown devil plants himself there and always in the same spot. He stares up at our windows, rolling his eyes like a dying calf—it's hardly on the Frau Doctor's account, and certainly not on mine."

As she spoke she pointed to the palm-tree at the edge of the harbor wall, against which Fargalla was leaning; but Hartwang drew back from the window, that the Bedouin might not see him. Then, in tones almost unintelligible from her hoarseness, she added: "To think that he dares to carry on this shameful game at the Fräulein's expense in broad daylight! I tell you, Herr Professor—but—there, there! Just see . . . The English people in that boat . . . Yes, laugh! I'd like to beat the tall red-head on his fireman's helmet! How he points at our windows with his baboon arm! And look there! Those people behind the boat. That's the clerk from the office and the impudent woman who gives out the linen. They come here to look at the farce that's being performed as if they were in a theatre."

"It may be so," replied the professor quietly.

"But I should rather believe that you misinterpret what is going on below. The people from the hotel seem to be merely waiting for the basket of fish which the Arabians are just bringing ashore, and the Bedouin was leaning, a short time ago, in precisely the same way against the pillar in the courtyard. Besides, he can stand where he chooses. Fräulein Laura wishes him to remain near her, but you know how unpleasant it is to her to attract attention. She must be informed of the Bedouin's conduct, and that it has, perhaps, already been noticed. This very day, or when I have gone, she can do whatever she thinks best. Duty summons me home. Tomorrow I expect . . ."

Here Traut interrupted him with an exclamation of terror, crying as she involuntarily laid her hand upon his arm: "Anything but that!"

There was such deep horror in the tone that Hartwang could not help smiling, and in the pleasant, soothing voice which he had accustomed himself to use beside sick-beds, he replied: "She has certainly done very well without me for a long time, and will continue to do so."

"But her eye!" sighed the old servant.

"Is entirely beyond danger, and she will be in

good hands with Doctor Bilani," the professor assured her.

"And the Bedouin?"

"Some day the time to return home will come, and in Germany people do not need guides through the desert."

"People, people!" repeated Traut confusedly. "But as for 'people,' sensible, ordinary folk—when did our young lady ever care for them? Oh, Herr Peter, I have carried Laura in my arms! I can look into her heart as if it were made of glass, though I am only a plain woman, and she knows and understands far more than is good for women. In the city, where I cannot follow her, and many things are discussed too far above the heads of common folks, I have nothing to say. But here, where she lies still and nothing happens that I do not see and understand, I read her soul as though it was an open book. And, Herr Peter, while you were away hunting for corals something took place there, something unusual and great. May I never see our dear Cologne, the Rhine, and our cathedral steeple again, if I didn't perceive the truth!"

"Well?" asked Hartwang eagerly. Traut, happy that the reserved man, to whom she looked

up reverently, was condescending to listen to her, approached him with a significant smile, then, putting her hand over her mouth, whispered: "Call me what you choose, if she isn't in love like any other girl, and over her ears!"

"Folly!" Peter interrupted angrily, approaching the door of the anteroom; but the servant barred his way and, undismayed, continued: "For the first time, Herr Peter, she is just like any other girl of her age. True, it was long enough before it came, and she wasn't as she is now even at the time, you know, when she was looking for a future home with you. But, during this last week, it has burst upon her with all its power. In the night—I heard her distinctly—she sobbed aloud, and once I saw her sit up, clasp her hands, look up to the ceiling, and pray."

"It may be so," interrupted the professor. "One who suffers feels that human intelligence and skill do not suffice to keep or restore his dearest possession—health, sight, and again finds his God, though he may have been long estranged from him. This is a common experience to physicians, and if Laura, now that she believes her sight threatened, accustoms herself to look

to Heaven again, I shall rejoice. But her tears have as little to do with love as prayer."

"But what else causes them?" cried the maid eagerly. "No splinter entered my clear eyes, and they show me nothing which is not there. Laura is in love, I'll stick to that, Herr Peter, even though St. Gerian, who is my patron saint, should contradict me. Only the most important thing, with *whom* it is, I dare not—much as it grieves me—decide. True, the choice lies between two, and that's just what torments me and robs me of sleep and appetite, good as the cooking is here; for the bare thought that she might prefer the brown devil to a man like you . . ."

"Nonsense!" interrupted the surgeon's deep voice sternly, and before Traut could soothe him he had already tapped lightly at the door and entered Laura's room.

CHAPTER XII.

LAURA VERNISSEN'S sitting-room was large, airy, and tastefully furnished. Two of the windows looking out upon the sea were curtained. At the third only these draperies were drawn back far enough to allow Frau Helene to see the letters in the book from which she had been reading aloud. Now this was no longer possible; the darkness of night was beginning to follow the brief twilight, and the widow had risen to ring for the Indian servant, who usually did not bring in the lamp until later.

To-day Laura had desired to go on with the reading at once, for the novel had fascinated her, and she wanted to hear the end, which they had nearly reached.

When Hartwang entered, she was sitting erect upon the comfortable long divan which, a few days ago, had served for a couch. The shade which had protected her eyes until the approach

of twilight lay beside the novel, and between them stood a pretty Oriental jar, while bottles of mineral water and goblets were ranged on an oval table near the divan.

Often, while listening, Laura had glanced impatiently toward the door of the anteroom. As Peter opened it, a bright flush mounted into her face, still somewhat emaciated by the recent fever, and the manner in which she extended both hands to her friend, exclaiming: "Back at last, and once more at your post, you deserter!" reminded him vividly of the happy days of the past and the old maid-servant's assurance. The mental conviction that he possessed a better right to Laura's love than the foreign protector made his own blood crimson his cheeks.

Though he had come to say farewell and to tell her frankly that he could not reconcile it with his manhood to be the rival of a Faragalla, her manner compelled him to defer this intention, at least for the present.

The old love, which had already patiently accepted so many unendurable things because they came from her, again raised its head yearningly. He even began to reproach himself for having attributed to Laura something unworthy

of her pure nature. Surely what attracted her to the son of the desert could be explained by one of the fleeting emotions, incomprehensible changes of feeling of her nature, so prone to follow independent paths.

How could he have answered her greeting less cordially than it was offered? Besides, it made him so happy to hold her hand in his and to find that she did not withdraw it.

He had entered the room angry—nay, ready for combat; but could he be anything but cheerful and content when she gave to his questions concerning her physical condition a series of reassuring answers, and, with warm interest, desired to hear about his expedition to the coral reefs of Tor? What he had to relate seemed to him worth communicating; he knew how eagerly she, too, had busied herself with these little organisms, and during his story he felt the pleasure of being understood by her, where other women would have lacked the ability to follow him. The young naturalist was no less delighted than he with the new discoveries which Hartwang believed that he had made in the life of the coral insects, and no professional zoologist could have interrupted him with more apprecia-

tive questions. They belonged to each other. However unlike their natures might be, her intellect, which comprehended his at half a word, was akin to his own. To-day her heart also seemed to incline toward him, and his throbbed for her with all its old fervor. He would not give her up, in spite of all the Bedouins in the world.

Meanwhile, the lamp was brought in, but Laura ordered it to be placed on the larger table at the end of the long room, instead of the one before the divan. She liked to listen to Hartwang's deep voice, and thought it sounded more musical in the twilight.

The day before Frau Helene had unexpectedly met her brother-in-law on the stairs. He had just arrived, and was waiting for the departure of the ship that was to convey him and his family to German East Africa, where he intended to raise ostriches. Laura willingly permitted her companion to devote this evening to her relatives, and confessed to Peter that she was glad just now to be separated from her shadow, whom, however, she had learned recently, for the first time, to appreciate at her full value. She also praised the widow as a reader, and when Peter had finished his story and asked what his friend

had been doing during his absence, Laura took the book from the table and answered, smiling:

"We are just finishing this novel."

"Dickens's story of Coketown and Thomas Gradgrind, the man of facts?" he asked gayly.

"Say, rather," she replied in the same tone, "the romance of poor Louisa."

"It speaks well for it that you have read it nearly to the end," Hartwang remarked carelessly, drawing the volume toward him.

"It might have been much longer. Unfortunately we have only a few pages left," Laura replied more gravely. Then, looking him directly in the face, she said firmly: "Now I know why you selected this particular story for me and refused to get my soaked box of books."

"The little book and stationery shop here keeps nothing but the Tauchnitz Collection."

"That is very probable. Yet you considered it a fortunate accident to find just this special novel among them. As the prudent physician you are, you also seek invalid diet for souls, and your choice only shows what seems to you wholesome for mine."

"And suppose it were so?" he asked kindly.

"It is so!" Laura answered firmly. "I now

know also what diagnosis you made of my mental condition. You believe me a misled creature who, in spite of her youth, seeks true salvation in the realm of the actual, and, therefore, renounces all the sweet things, such as the bright world of poesy and the consoling power of childish superstition, whose intoxicating fragrance and magical glory transfigure the lives of other girls. You perceived that to follow my own will, the nature born in me, and its demands, would be the compass of my life. You recognized that to see clearly, even though there is much repulsiveness to be witnessed, seems to me more desirable than, with closed lids, to dream sweetly of uncertain things. Besides, you pitied me because, in my struggle for knowledge, and while—at least in some provinces of learning—I dug somewhat deeper than is customary among us women, I forgot to enjoy myself by sucking honey from every flower.”

“Laura!” he answered in a tone of denial; but she seized the novel and turned the pages with hasty fingers to the one where she had placed the book-mark, exclaiming: “You think that, to her, knowledge is far above any other pleasure, that to assert herself and her own nature is of more

value than the approval of others. Her highest goal is to keep her eyes open to see and to comprehend. What lies beyond our powers of perception has no existence for her until it is accepted among scientific problems. In doing this, her soul is injured and she shuts herself out from the heaven which opens to the devout of her sex. So she loses the consolation and hope that aid other women to bear more easily the burden which is imposed upon every one and adorn their life-paths with exquisite distant views. So long as my mother lived you knew me as a different person. What then constrained me to prayer, and gave as a reward the strange desire which impelled me to raise my eyes above reality and seek the sweetest joys in realms that do not belong to this world, you believed to be my good angel, and it would rejoice you to lead me back to him. You—do not deny it!—you placed this book in my hands solely to force from me the confession that rang from the lips of poor Louisa when her life-ship was wrecked in the surges. There it is!”

She had uttered the last words in great agitation, and now pointed with her forefinger to the

passage she meant, exclaiming eagerly: "Bring the lamp here! But no! I have a good memory, and that cry of anguish—Frau Helene repeated it to me just now—impressed itself deeply upon it. What does it matter if I don't quote the words exactly? 'I should have been a million times wiser and happier,' is the cry of your Louisa, 'a million times more contented, more innocent and human in all good respects, if you had not shut out from me the kingdom of the ideal, than I am now with the keen open eyes which behold only reality.' That is her lament, and I, Peter, I . . ."

Here she threw back her head in great excitement, but Hartwang, who had listened with increasing sympathy, asked kindly: "And you—cannot you again find the organ that is needed, and understand this lament? Or must you . . .?"

Laura passed her slender hand quickly over her brow and hair, answering in a tone of protest: "All, I can understand all! Whoever, like me, has attained to comparing himself with no one except his own nature, and has placed his own being far above everything else, no longer values your antiquated slave morality, rejects the command with which you would fain force

woman to resist the earnest demands of her own nature and submit to society's most unjust injunctions."

"Society?" he asked bitterly. "What can it be to the Over Man, who places himself far above its morality and, therefore, above itself?"

"To the Over Man," cried Laura, with flashing eyes, drawing herself up to her full height. "I know at whom you are aiming. Would that I might resemble him and be an Over Man in his meaning!"

"May God forbid!" Hartwang interrupted with honest zeal; but Laura, with a harsh laugh, answered:

"I know how you fear the destroyer of the world. Only it is new to me to find you condemn without knowledge; for have you had time to examine his writings since we parted? No? Nor did he at first—you are surely aware of that—direct my course, only, by his strong, bold hand, I learned to use my own power more freely, and divest myself of many a weakness. And, moreover, I gained a correct understanding of the only justifiable lament: Woe is me that I am a grandchild! What heavy fetters the past hangs upon our feet! how many diseases from its do-

main lurk in our blood! Whoever does not succeed in freeing himself from them has been foredoomed to chronic suffering. In good air, and with careful nursing, the patient may appear convalescent, but every draught, every imprudent act, will rouse the disease anew. And I, who had abolished the folly of agreeing with the majority and, relying solely upon myself, did not take a step which my own nature would not have directed . . ."

"You say that," cried Hartwang, "after relinquishing the beautiful independence which I admired in you, to become captive to the doctrines of a man."

"Captive?" Laura vehemently retorted. "Is the seed dragged captive because it struggles from the darkness of the cellar into a brighter light? This is what I have done, and made myself at home in it. I found genuine salvation within the limits of the true and accurate. And I, I am to be driven from their boundaries by a book, an imaginary story, a novel with a purpose, which upholds the bauble every sensible child of our time is blowing into empty air? The fact that it came from your hand is the only thing which prevented me from throwing it aside after

the first chapter. I am not in the habit of reading novels. When I was a schoolgirl, I tormented myself with them for the last time while studying English. I enjoy individual poems and serious dramas, but I do not care to go to the theatre. You know how I dislike to see people whose delusive art enables them to appear what they are not. At first I listened to the Coketown story—I have already said so—impatiently. Not until Louisa's destiny began to fascinate me did it gain interest. At last what you probably anticipated happened. It could not fail to be so. To compare this Louisa with myself was really attractive. I soon perceived—and you, too, must feel it—that at first she had nothing in common with me. It would be an insult to compare her parents with mine, our surroundings with those amid which she grew up. How thoroughly unlike, too, were our natural endowments! There was only a single point of resemblance. Devotion to the actual and the exclusion of the sentimental aspirations of the soul exerted as decisive an influence upon her fate as perhaps it has also on mine. She was thereby plunged into misery. Of course, all this was opposed to her gentle, imaginative character, but it suits mine because,

from the first, I cared little for the Utopia which the power of the imagination builds from cards, and am content with the pleasures afforded by the things of this world and their perception. If you merely desired to show me that Laura's path, if I pursued it farther, would leave me dissatisfied and must lead to unhappiness, like that of the daughter of the pedantic calculating machine . . ."

"Nothing was farther from my thoughts than such an unkind intention," Hartwang interrupted. "What I expected for you from this novel was something totally different. The scientific and philosophical works in your chest of books do not suit—on this point I may probably venture to trust my own opinion—are not at all adapted to your present condition. I desired to set before the convalescent wholesome but not too heavy fare, and this novel by Dickens is thoroughly that, besides its admirable quality of being entertaining from beginning to end. But when you became intensely interested, it could not fail to happen that in your thoughtful manner you asked yourself the question how it was that you, favored in so many respects above thousands—nay, millions of others—should

be forced to confess to me that you were consuming your strength in bitter discontent. I believed that the answer would be found in this book; I imagined that the investigation would show your inquiring mind that there are things outside the practical world which woman's soul needs in order to attain real contentment. You learned in your early youth to know them, and, if I am not mistaken, there were years when they were dear to you also. Unfortunately you desire, as I see, to erase them from your book of life."

"Dear?" she eagerly interrupted. "The child's mind had been accustomed to them, and as, at that time, I still believed that the magnificent multitude of the stars were the little lights with which the angels illumined Paradise at night, I also unresistingly accepted the other things to which your slave religion subjugated the thinking mind. When I had once been induced to believe in the divine Love, which, in reality, fills the world with such bitter suffering, and cherished no doubt of its omnipotence, I asked from it in prayer whatever my heart at that time desired—pleasant weather for the excursion to Godesberg, the learning of my lessons, that my mother might not notice the

burnt places in my dress, which I had received in Werner's laboratory. Usually my petitions were fulfilled, and, I admit, the mere prayer, and my firm faith that it would be heard, often afforded me great relief and exquisite consolation. I was reminded of it again, and on that account you may be content with the success of your plan. Your Louisa's cry of anguish haunted me like a 'mene tekell.' It was on account of my mother, whom I saw as a spirit pointing warningly to her. This was what disturbed my sleep at night. Every word that Louisa hurled at her narrow-minded father forced me to think of my mother and myself. Would I be able to assure my mother that I had been wiser in the direction of my life than she? I asked myself. Had I really succeeded in becoming happier, more content, more innocent? No, certainly not, was the reply; and when I examined my heart to learn whether it was enriched by love, it shrank in pain, and I could not help weeping when I confessed it to my mother—could not refrain from weeping and sobbing, as though I were again a child at school, in spite of the deep shame with which I struggled against the emotion. And if ever I had reason to pour

out my mental suffering in tears, it was during those nights . . . For though your heart throbbed warmly for me, and another's, perhaps, still more ardently, whom had I ever rendered happy by love? Even the well-disposed woman who accompanied me on the journey, and drew near with the genuine wish to love me, would have preferred to turn from me because my reserved, cool nature at last became unendurable. She herself admitted that, during her self-sacrificing, faithful nursing, she had grown more attached to me. But, should I desire to make the new philosophy I am following responsible for this, I should be unjust to the light-bearer who attracts me by his beautiful endeavors to raise us from a generation of slaves to ruling nobles, and also not quite just to love. Even love he traces back to selfishness, making love and avarice blood relatives. No, no! In the transformation of old values, Friedrich Nietzsche, it seems to me, has not yet rightly understood the real nature of love. Woman's, at least, does *not* seek solely to gain, but with a still more ardent longing, to give, to surrender herself, sacrifice herself even to the point of the destruction of egoism. In saying this, I, who place individuality above

everything else, may seem to contradict myself. But whoever, in renunciation, wishes to have something valuable to bestow, will esteem himself as highly as possible. One must be a prince in order to possess the power to dispense princely gifts. But where am I wandering? I wept and shed bitter tears—on your account, too, Peter. I will conceal nothing, absolutely nothing; for when will the hour again come when I shall once more find the courage and the desire to speak as I am doing now and balance accounts with you?”

“Do so,” he cried eagerly. “Blessed be this evening if it will bring a clear understanding between us two! I have suffered much—much for love’s sake, without resentment and in patient hope; but I am only a man, and this very day I felt that the strength to endure this torturing uncertainty longer was failing me. If you ever had anything that resembled love . . .”

“Do you doubt it?” Laura interrupted sorrowfully. “But how could you help it? And yet, Peter, I cared for you when you permitted me to stay with you and Werner, when you read Feuerbach and argued about Schopenhauer; and how much dearer you became when your fidelity

and skill saved my brother's life—alas, for how brief a space! And then—my heart can never feel more tender gratitude than in the time which followed those terrible days when the cholera bereft me of the three persons who were dearest to me in the world—my parents, my brother. Yes, those days! You, too, still remember them. How kindly, how delicately, with what fraternal affection you poured balm into the bleeding wounds of the despairing girl! I owe it to you, to you alone, that I did not then lose my reason.”

“And yet, yet you could bring yourself . . .” he said reproachfully, pressing his hand upon his heart; but she interrupted beseechingly: “That, that—let that rest now, Peter, I entreat you; for, you see, the old gods were lost to me beside those three death-beds, and when I again tried to accustom myself to the altered life, my ear, too, had caught the proud question: If there were gods, how could I endure not to be one? If I could not belong to the divinities, I would, at least, obedient to the demand of the sage who put that question, try to become the sovereign creature who resembles only himself. When I saw women place themselves below you men, and myself, who felt the impulse toward rulership, as

it were, degraded to the inferior position, my sensations were akin to those of the brave soldier who, because he has been shamefully misjudged, has his stripes torn off. This heart had never loved any one but you—the hope of sharing a whole life with you promised me happiness; but to sacrifice the newly recognized right of following my own nature as a sovereign human being, let myself be stunted . . .”

“Seemed to you too hard,” Hartwang reproachfully interrupted. “You, you, who just confessed that love was the longing for surrender, clung to your prerogative?”

“I did,” cried Laura. “Could I help it? Only consider what threatened me, all that menaced my pride, my liberty, from a man who, at the first concession love asked of him . . .”

“The sacrifice of my dignity!” he indignantly exclaimed.

“If you had only made it!” cried Laura eagerly. “Everything would have been different, would have been better. Yet I set out on this long journey with your image in my heart. I was resentful, but you were still dear to me, and even now there is no one on earth whom I esteem more highly than you, the best of good men, you

my peerless friend. My soul was inseparably united to yours; for a long time you were the only man to whom I could have confided myself and my fate with perfect trust; but other impressions—I must remain truthful in this hour, painful as it may be to you and to me—many new emotions hitherto undreamed of cast you into the background.”

Here she hesitated, while Hartwang, in the firm expectation of learning something difficult to endure, gazed with frowning brows at the book he had seized; but Laura found it harder than she had anticipated to say plainly what her honest nature forbade her to conceal from him.

At last she uttered his name in the most tender tone her voice could command. He raised his eyes, and when their glances met, she smiled, and then, with a deep sigh, continued:

“How hard this is, Peter! You are a man, and what I have to confess is so strange, so difficult, so almost incomprehensible, even to myself, that you will not, cannot understand me, and will raise a stone to fling at me before I can say what I have to bring forward in explanation of these strange events. . . . I need not apologize for myself, for whatever the human being who

does not relinquish the right of living out himself is impelled to do by his individual nature is right for him."

"But only according to the law which the savage or the undisciplined man obeys," Hartwang interposed, still scarcely able to master the vehement agitation which had seized upon him with twofold violence after her smile had filled him with renewed hope.

Then Laura's anger flamed up, and she cried in great excitement: "You believe that? Of course, whoever yields unresistingly to the degrading demands of a degenerating society, and, therefore, does not share in the great work of transforming all values, to which the greatest philosopher and thinker of all the ages summons us, may regard the bold, frank desires and acts of free souls, of a powerful nature, as insubordination. The Papuan, who does not understand the object, will think that the horse which, in racing, leaps over hedges and ditches, has run away and—as you said—is insubordinate. Must the rider spring from his saddle because the fiery zeal of his noble animal might be misunderstood? Look at me as indignantly as you choose. I feel within my soul, nevertheless, that there is no

higher goal—even for me—than to cast off the slave nature I have inherited and reconquer the exquisite rights of the lordly race. The battle is a hard one, for what forced the yoke upon my neck—the religion that leads to the disgrace of humility, and the hypocritical, lying social customs which gnaw all noble things are the execrable destroyers of mankind, because on the marshy soil of their domains was brewed the magic potion that converted bold freemen, strong to resist, into begging slaves and patient sufferers.

“Let me speak plainly, Peter. Why did I receive you so ungraciously at our meeting in the desert? Because I foresaw that you would enter the lists against the sacred convictions I owe to the new philosophy of salvation. As the red cloth enrages the bull, the bare name of the bold apostle of truth robs you of calmness and repose, but I cannot, will not endure to see his soul-redeeming philosophy suspected, misunderstood, distorted by you. I cannot and ought not, all the less, because I who, a few weeks ago, believed myself immovably strong, was forced to perceive how weak I still am, because I saw fulfilled all, and far more than all I had dreaded in meeting you. Whoever owes an-

other so great a debt of gratitude, as I do you, enters the conflict with fettered hands. Therefore, I could not so frankly defend what I saw wounded and incensed you as was commanded by my duty to my master and myself. Oh, with what powers he has to struggle! The hydra, that had a head grow in place of every one which was stricken off, was a harmless hunting-dog by comparison with them. I learned this by my own experience, and the half-scarred wounds still burn. As I lay fevered by the dread and danger of losing my sight, sometimes cursing my fate, sometimes assailed by torturing anxiety, and you so kindly comforted me and told me of my mother, her patient submission and the consolation she derived from the faith which she retained to her life's end, the old memories rose before me like the bewitching nixies who draw the fishermen down to them, and—I have already confessed it—fidelity to myself and to the great doctrine of liberty vanished, at least so long as this weakness mastered me.

“Before you placed yonder book in my hands to crown your work of recovery, as you doubtless secretly regard it, I clasped my hands when fear of blindness and mental anguish became too

great, and prayed as I had done in childhood before receiving my mother's good-night kiss. My tears did not flow for the first time over Louisa's pitiful fate. The pillow was wet when I woke in the morning, and if I could have reached my mother, I would have begged her forgiveness like a penitent—for what? For the honest desire to make myself the best, the noblest being into which the free man could shape himself. Such is the power of old habit! I thought it would remain forever with the dead past, now that I had perceived its degrading demands and cast it from me; but, like trampled weeds, at the first shower of rain, it once more appeared within the closed courtyard at that attack of weakness. But, thanks to your skill and care, I soon regained a portion of my former power of resistance. My mind, too, became calmer and clearer. Then I saw how just the master had been when he branded the enervating power of Christianity. What had I become through the return to it? From a free, lordly ruler, deciding my own destiny and obeying only my own nature, to a half-crushed, weeping creature ready to accept any humiliation.

“ In those pitiable hours I was like a person in

the delirium of hasheesh, in which people are said to feel happy. But they, too, have also vanished, and the sufferings inflicted by shame and rage at my own weakness during the process of sobering really weighed more heavily than my obligations to prayer. Matters had again gone so far with me. Besides, there was the terrible conflict, the horrible uncertainty concerning the demands of my own heart. Yes, Peter, it had raised its voice loudly and imperiously; for I had met a man who, perhaps, is not, like you, worthy of my boundless confidence, and who certainly is greatly my inferior in mental culture, but in whom my soul recognized the true lordly man, the free, self-confident to insubordination, proud, bold noble.

“And this freest of the sons of a free people wore every chain with which I chose to bind him as if it were the most costly ornament, his unbridled arrogance melted at a single glance from my eyes. My sign is to him a decree of fate. The passion that consumes him is like a scorching fire. One gesture, and he would die the most terrible death for my sake. What reward is worthy of such devotion of the heart?

Again and again this question forced itself upon me. But, at the same time, my warning, grateful soul constantly reminded me of all the priceless benefits I owe to you, who now have even saved my sight. Not only duty, but my heart, urges me to fulfil your every wish; but dare I, therefore, turn my back, like an ingrate, upon him who sees in me his destiny, who, to gratify a caprice of his dear mistress, defies the utmost perils, and who became the saviour of my life when he dragged me, half suffocated, from the smoking ruins of the tent . . . ?”

“Faragalla!” Hartwang, with a bitter laugh, here interrupted the excited girl. “How many high-sounding words for a delusion whose subject is certainly not sublime!”

“Take that back,” cried Laura indignantly.

But Hartwang, when he saw her eyes fill with tears, added in a more gentle tone:

“At least permit me to retain my opinion so far as the Bedouin is concerned.”

Then the deeply offended girl, scarcely able to control her voice, exclaimed, as if frantic:

“You shall take it back or leave me.”

“It was my intention to do the latter, and

to-morrow, before I entered the room," he answered quietly. "I came to tell you that I must return to Germany."

Laura's face blanched, and the pressure of her hand upon her heart betrayed the pain occasioned by the surprise.

At any other time this discovery would have been welcome, but now the surgeon was so deeply incensed and wounded that he persisted in his resolve, seized his hat, and, after waiting vainly for a soothing word from her, added: "It is uncertain whether I shall have time to-morrow to bid you a last farewell. Any further conversation now would only deepen the gulf that has opened between us during this hour. It is quite possible that I may not have an opportunity to see you again. So permit me now to say in the briefest words what, as a physician and a friend . . ."

"A friend?" she interrupted in a tone of mingled contempt and reproach. But when he answered with grave decision: "Yes, as your friend!" she raised her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed aloud.

Hartwang approached and, seized with sincere compassion, went on in a tone of entreaty rather

than counsel: "And because I shall always remain so, I repeat: Whatever may happen to disturb you mentally, beware of the weeping to which the over-excited nerves of the convalescent now incline you. Tears at present are poison to your still weakened sight. Spare your eyes. This the physician beseeches; but if, in consequence of the course to which I see myself forced, you doubt whether it is a true friend who speaks to you here and now, you will learn that I am still one if—which may God forbid!—bitter disappointment overtakes you. Ask your own experience, Laura, what awaits the ship of life at whose helm stands the unbridled impulses of an impetuous nature."

While speaking, he had clasped her hand, but his last words induced her to snatch it from his hold.

How icy cold it was! Did not love and duty still command him to remain with her, to treat her like a child sick in body and soul, and to force himself to forget what suffering she inflicted on him?

Just at that moment an Arabian boatman's shout of command floated through the open window. The Bedouin's image and Laura's

confession rose with fresh vividness before his mind, and, as if he must assert his own dignity, Hartwang, after a brief farewell, turned toward the door. His hand already rested on the lock. Then a wave of feeling surged hotly in his heart, and with the exclamation, "May God watch over you!" he looked back at her. But he could not see her face; she had pressed it into the pillows.

Traut was sitting in the anteroom asleep, her head resting on the novel by Spielhagen which she had been reading. After informing the astonished maid-servant in curt, hasty words that he intended to leave the next day, giving her some medical directions, and promising to send a new wash for her young lady's eyes, he hurriedly shook hands and, without heeding her protestations, rushed down the stairs into the open air.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE shore was crowded with people who had gone there to enjoy the cool breezes, but the profound agitation of Hartwang's soul made him feel uncomfortable in the throng, and he returned to the hotel. The clock was striking ten just as he entered the courtyard. Many guests were still seated, singly or in groups, along the sides in the light of the torches or gay Chinese lanterns, but the reading-room into which he glanced was perfectly empty. He had not read a newspaper during his whole excursion, and, dreading his hot sleeping-room, went into the brilliantly lighted apartment, and, looking through several journals, began to glance over the Munich *Allgemeine*. But what did he care for the affairs of the world? Of what interest to him now was the admirable essay upon ecclesias-

tical politics in the "Supplement," which yesterday would have claimed his utmost attention? Every sorrow, and not least the suffering of the heart, renders us selfish. Even the compassionate man, when his own wounds are aching, pays little heed to the thousands who may be bleeding on some distant battle-field.

Hartwang saw few of the printed words before him while mentally repeating Laura's confession, sentence by sentence. When the clock struck half-past eleven, he threw down the *Times* which he had just picked up, and rose.

Just at that moment a woman's gay voice greeted him through the open window, and directly after Laura's travelling companion stood before him. Never had he seen the young widow look so pretty, so radiant with happiness, and, pleasantly surprised, he exclaimed: "You certainly appear as though you had met Happiness herself."

"So I have," she answered merrily. "They say she flits past all of us once. I waited long enough, but now I shall hold her well-known forelock firmly, if possible."

"That's right," Hartwang answered in the same tone, "and if I can aid you . . ."

"Hardly," she gayly interrupted. "Yet it would be very kind if you could help me to guard my peace of mind from the impending disturbance. Traut is a thoroughly reliable woman, is she not? Her faithful nursing will be sufficient for Fräulein Vernissen, who is now far advanced in convalescence, if I should leave her to-morrow."

"You mean to part from her?" cried Hartwang in surprise. "Liberty is, indeed, a precious thing, and we may rejoice to regain it after a long service. Yet I should think there might be circumstances . . . Listen to me, dear lady! Though you have often found Fräulein Laura very irritable and impatient lately . . ."

"Oh, not at all!" the young widow eagerly interrupted. "The last few weeks have brought me nearer to her than the long succession of months which we formerly spent together. I probably owe her changed manner specially to your intervention. I beg you not to attribute my brighter face to the expectation of regaining my independence. I even find it difficult to part from Fräulein Vernissen . . . What is making me happy . . ."

Here she hesitated slightly, then, obeying a

true, warm impulse of the heart, exclaimed: "You have gained the right to my confidence, and I know no one to whom I would more readily grant it, or whose opinion would be of greater value. So let me tell you what excites me so pleasantly. I will make my story short. And then—I will follow the advice of a well-meaning friend."

"Speak," said Peter kindly. But without accepting his invitation to sit down, she began in a hurried tone, as if every minute was precious: "You laughed when you saw in the novel by Wilkie Collins, which I read during my night watching, the statement that no girl on earth ever went to the altar with her first love—even the youngest could name a former one; but there are exceptions to every rule. In the main, this saying is certainly true. It befell me also. When I had scarcely put on long dresses, I met a certain Emil, who wore the army uniform, a very young lieutenant, who took a fancy to me, as I did to him. But you know how it is: Where nothing seeks to wed nothing, the monster 'Caution,' without whom, in the German army, Hymen cannot heal the wounds dealt by Cupid, interposes. In our case there were neither

parents nor kind uncles nor aunts ready or able to spring into the breach, so we were compelled—not without tears—to part. Emil, unwedded, continued to train recruits; I, who still needed education myself, devoted myself to teaching little girls of ten to become more worthy members of cultivated society, until my late husband sought me. You know how soon death ended our marriage. That it proved happier than would have been expected from the conditions under which I, at least, entered it, I once told you, though you have probably forgotten it. Then I wandered over the world with Fräulein Vernissen until the enforced stay here, which I really did not in the least regret. Yet what we term misfortunes are often only discords which the great Composer uses to enhance the charm of the harmonies into which he makes them flow. Here in Suez I have learned this again. Yesterday I met, entirely by accident, as if a meteor had fallen from the sky—it was on the stairs—my brother-in-law, and soon after his wife, my sister, and her three splendid children. They are on their way to Kilimandscharo to breed ostriches, and in their party is—you probably guess who—Emil, whom the tyrant poverty once compelled to give me up;

now he is waiting impatiently just outside the dining-room with my relatives for my return. I have been his betrothed bride an hour. The engagement was speedy—we had exchanged our vows of love long ago. His proposal was: ‘Will you?’ A nod was my consent. Then our betrothal was celebrated by a glass of champagne. He had served two years with the troops in Eastern Africa, and, in doing so, found life in the Dark Continent pleasant. My brother-in-law, a capable, experienced agriculturist, had maintained himself with difficulty on the estate he had hired, but a short time since Emil inherited property from a wealthy uncle. The two men, who had been intimate school friends, now formed a partnership, and expect to reap a fortune from their ostrich-farm. Emil knows the country and the people; my brother-in-law had established a reputation as an excellent cattle-raiser. The capital they are to invest is not inconsiderable, though Emil left two-thirds of his inheritance in Germany, that I, whom he intended to make his wife—the letter containing his offer of marriage went astray, I don’t know where—might be secured from poverty and care if the enterprise should fail. Now that we have

met here, he wishes me to go with him and my relatives on the ship that sails to-morrow. If this arrangement is made, the civil wedding will take place at the consulate. The religious service is to be performed by a Würtemberg clergyman, who is going into the interior as a missionary. We do not lack love and hope, but I should not like to begin the new life with a desertion that would burden my conscience. You know the great debt of gratitude which my aged mother and I owe to Fräulein Vernissen, and if you . . .”

Here she was interrupted by Hartwang's congratulations and his grave inquiry whether she had yet discussed these important matters with Laura.

“I went to her,” was the reply, “but I found her in tears and great excitement. To her vivacious nature, this long inactivity is hard to bear. Besides, the clerk had given me a telegram for her, whose contents caused great excitement. I had told her of my early love; but she who, for the last few weeks, has been sympathy itself, listened—I perceived it—with little attention, and in reply to the question whether she could do without me just now, answered only: ‘Go, and

stay as long as you choose. I have no right to interrupt your happiness.' She had probably understood my request to leave her merely as an entreaty to be permitted to remain longer with my betrothed husband this evening, not as a final parting. It was undoubtedly my duty to correct the misconception at once; but when I gazed into her sad, tearful eyes, which used to gaze into the world so steadfastly and joyously, my courage failed, and I shall have to make up for my omission to-morrow, unless, Herr Professor, you can assure me that there is no further danger to be feared for the convalescing girl and her sight. If it should be otherwise, then, of course . . ."

"Then?" asked Hartwang anxiously.

"Then I would ask my future husband," she answered sadly, "to add to the years of patience which we have endured a few more weeks, or, if it must be, months. The marriage could take place under any circumstances, and I am old enough to travel to the antipodes without protection, if necessary."

"Good, good," cried the professor, holding out his hand to the young widow, who blushed as she clasped it. "But I hope that this great sacrifice will not be required of you. Fräulein

Laura herself is entirely out of danger. Her sight is also safe, if she will stop the weeping, which is as little in harmony with her nature, on whose demands she lays so much stress, as another error with which those tears are, perhaps, connected."

"I know, I know," Frau Helene interrupted, with a pitying shrug of the shoulders, and the lines of anxiety between the mouth and nose, which he had so often noticed, again appeared distinctly. "You are thinking of the Bedouin, and I am aware how that strange fancy originated. The idolatrous reverence—nay, the humble devotion—which he displayed so visibly probably flattered Laura's vanity; but she would scarcely have given him a warmer feeling on its account than she would have bestowed on a specially devoted hunting-dog. Her master and his doctrines, which overturn everything that is customary, from the highest to the lowest, are much more responsible for this error. How often it has seemed incomprehensible that a mind so free and independent as this highly gifted, noble-minded creature's could accommodate itself to the work of destruction, and even follow with such unresisting devotion the mad capers of

another intellect! No convert can subject himself to the new religion with more zealous obedience than she renders the strange convictions and unprecedented demands of this upturner of the world, who builds upon the ruins of the old morality a new something which he calls by the same name and which . . . good Heavens!"

"Do you know Nietzsche's writings thoroughly?" asked the surgeon.

"Only too well," replied Frau Helene with a faint sigh. "How many hours of my married life were spoiled by them, and I now know that they are to blame for the estrangement which so long embittered my companionship with Fräulein Laura. But I will explain that to you tomorrow."

"Of course, you are anxious to return to your lover," replied Hartwang, "and I certainly will not detain you longer. Only, as I know Nietzsche's works solely by hearsay, there is one thing more I should like to ascertain.—'Art is long, and time is fleeting.'—A certain great hospital, to which a professorship belongs, claims the surgeon's whole strength. I learned a short time ago, by accident, through the melancholy shipwreck of a talented pupil who, like Laura,

had allowed himself to be bewitched by this overbold revolutionist, something of what he desires and demands. I also learned from a friend at home, who is a specialist in insanity, that the thinker who strove to work upward to the Over Man fell a victim to incurable madness."

"Oh," cried Frau Helene, clasping her hands in astonishment, "how horrible! But perhaps this frightful end of her apostle might open Fräulein Laura's eyes to many things. Surely, as a friend, you have already showed her the final result of these brain-scorching doctrines, which, nevertheless—I must admit it—shine with a dazzling, though flickering, radiance."

"No," replied Hartwang firmly. "We must not alarm with a fresh spectre of horror a soul that is already so deeply troubled. But, my question! If you can spare me fifteen minutes to-morrow, you can explain your opinion of the baffled improver of the world. To-night I would only ask what share of Laura's delusion you impute to Nietzsche."

"Then listen," the widow began. "You know how thoroughly, before her departure, your friend studied Nietzsche. As to the former, he imagines himself akin to our prehistoric ancestor,

the lordly man, who, a magnificent blond beast of prey, proud and cruel, bravely, a scorner of every peril, maintained his mastery with the utmost recklessness until his morality was conquered by the slave man, who to him is embodied in the devout Christian. This system of ethics requires us to make the suffering of others our own, to ease our neighbor's life, to show ourselves helpful to others, to exercise charity, to work diligently, and to bear patiently even the sorest troubles. With it the qualities of the bondman gained the ascendancy over those of the noble; and humility, the Christian's most beautiful ornament, is certainly as decidedly a virtue of the servant, like patience, helpfulness, etc. To Nietzsche's deepest regret, this slave morality gained the victory over that of the lords. It acquired the government of society, thereby rendering it a community of slaves. Whoever desired to free it must rescue it from the fetters of the slave morality which Christianity preaches and render the humble and patient man a bold upholder of his own will, the helpful, merciful ones, men who pitilessly assert the demands of their own nature, if necessary, with the cruelty which is in the blood of that beast of prey called

man. The most utter absence of consideration must take the place of patience and pity. The individual can become the lordly ruler, the Over Man, in the highest sense, only when, in thought and deed, he learns to forget what the old morality requires. Beyond the boundaries of good and evil the lordly man must renounce these antiquated ideas. Thus, he will become a sovereign creature, who obeys no compulsion except that which emanates from his own nature, and does not allow himself to be checked by the obstacles or urged by the promises which a deceitful religion has smuggled into the life of mankind. When man attains this degree of outward and inward freedom, he will, like the oak in the open field, whose branches develop into the most beautiful proportions, resemble only himself and attain the highest perfection of which our race is capable. . . .

“These are approximately the maxims which Fräulein Laura enthusiastically admired as great and full of promise for the development of that society which, in its present condition, she had learned at home to scorn and abhor, even before she became familiar with Nietzsche. She had also formed, in her imagination, a distinct picture of

the ruling man, as her master described him. In Syria, Faragalla took charge of our little travelling party. Now, on foot, weary of waiting so long, and probably tortured by longing for the desert and freer movement, he scarcely looks like himself. If you could see him as we did then, caracoling on his magnificent charger, he would please even you. That Fräulein Laura very soon beheld Nietzsche's lord embodied in him seemed to me only too natural. In courage and every other attribute of the 'splendid beast of prey' he resembled him; in utterably selfish want of consideration he probably surpassed him. Where is the woman who would entirely withdraw herself from the impression produced by a man in whom the ideal for which she had vainly sought so long appeared, as it were, embodied? With Laura this impression was soon greatly deepened by the submissiveness, bordering upon idolatry, with which the Bedouin bowed his stiff neck, his boundless arrogance before her."

"You may see correctly," replied Hartwang with sorrowful earnestness. "And how cruelly Nietzsche's picture of man in bondage suits my poor self, devoting my time patiently and helpfully to the welfare of others!"

"For that very reason may you be blessed, blessed *within* the boundaries of good and evil," cried Frau Helene, deeply touched. "But this must suffice for to-day. Unluckily my Emil by no means possesses one of the patient slave natures, in spite of his tender waiting for the Rachel who did not even keep her faith to him. Farewell until to-morrow. My best consolation is the knowledge that you are still at Fräulein Laura's side."

"I really must return home, via Port Said or Alexandria, as soon as possible," the surgeon protested. "Laura has already heard from my own lips that duty will summon me from her to-morrow."

The young widow raised her hands imploringly, exclaiming: "Oh, just this once let the greater duty yield to the smaller; for Laura's sake and the sake of the philanthropy which makes you so great, exercise mercy before justice. How can I go if Laura is left in such a situation and mood, abandoned by every one who has any idea of her nature and the severe conflicts which are now raging in her soul! Don't look so sternly determined to refuse; be merciful. Love, the apostle says, bears and forgives everything,

and if you leave Laura, if you . . . Oh, sir! if you fulfil your intention and set out to-morrow, you will be acting more cruelly than if you rode pitilessly by the wounded wayfarer on the highway. . . . You will find me here again early to-morrow morning, before the young lady rises."

"At eight o'clock," Peter assented. "Only one thing more. Can you get Nietzsche's works?"

"Certainly," she answered. "The box of books—it stands in the office of the hotel—is open, and they are lying on the top. It's a wonder that Laura has not yet asked for them. Half morocco bindings, with green backs and white edges. In books she uses as she does these, she detests gilt edges. I will see you again to-morrow, and God grant I may find you determined to stay."

The slender young widow left the room and hurried across the courtyard to join her relatives. Peter Hartwang took all the books by Nietzsche that he could find and carried them to his room. It was long past midnight when he closed the last volume. While reading, he had sometimes

shaken his head angrily or scornfully; sometimes thrust the book indignantly aside; sometimes, too, he had perused whole paragraphs with earnest attention and passed on to the next with a murmured: "A pity!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning the professor breakfasted outside of the reading-room. He had not long to wait for Frau Helene, who came toward him with her party and presented Peter to them and her future husband. Even in his summer clothing, with a straw hat on his head, the latter had a soldierly bearing. His long moustache was somewhat gray, and many lines starting from the corners of the eyes furrowed his temples, but the carriage of his tall, thin figure was as stiff and erect as the youngest officer's. His gray eyes expressed sincere kindness, and this was the case, in a still greater degree, with the young widow's brother-in-law, a short, broad-shouldered man of forty. This fair-haired German's face, bronzed by the sun of the north, gave ample security for energetic activity also under that of the south, and his low but arched forehead justified the expectation that he would manage

the new enterprise with caution and shrewdness. In his wife, who, with all her simplicity and in spite of the toil-worn hands, which had labored busily in the great dairy on the estate, had retained the appearance of a lady, he was certainly taking with him the best possible assistant. Frau Helene had promised, at least for the present, to devote herself to the education of her sturdy, pretty nieces and nephews. If no special disaster overtook this closely united group, their venture could not fail to succeed. Hartwang expressed this opinion, and the farmer answered: "So we think too. Emil knows the conditions, and considers them favorable. We shall not fail to do our part. We are all accustomed to work, and if God's blessing attends us, we shall create yonder for ourselves an old age free from care and for the children a pleasanter and more independent existence than their parents had from their youth to the time of their departure."

The two men and Frau Helene's sister soon went away to discuss with the consul the arrangements for the marriage, but the betrothed bride, who had given her papers to her lover, remained with the professor. The young widow had frankly told Laura what regard for her own

happiness compelled her to say, and obtained Fräulein Vernissen's consent to leave her that evening and go on board the ship. It certainly had not been given unkindly, but with such apathetic submission to the inevitable that it pierced Frau Helene to the heart. What a change these last few weeks had wrought in the alert, energetic Laura! "This too!" she, the favorite of Fortune, had sighed, like one who had been pursued through life as a hunted deer. "Whatever ripens in the fields which I ploughed and where I scattered my seed the hail destroys. Did you ever see a field of grain beaten by hail-stones? If you could look into my soul, it would be easy for you to form a picture of it. . . . Everywhere traces of the most cruel destruction, an inextricable medley of crushed feelings and wishes. It struck even my convictions. Where I saw a goal, gray mists are hovering; where I expected loyal affection I meet insulting sternness and desertion. You were to me like a tree in a garden that unexpectedly began to bear beautiful fruit, and now another person digs it up to carry it by night to his own land. He is exercising his just right, and why should I try to keep you with me? There are so few happy people that it would be

a crime to block the path of even one who might become so. Go, Frau Helene, and may you be spared, in the bright hours awaiting you, any remembrance of me. Yet no! Our own prosperity gains an added charm when we compare it with the misery of others. Light colors are most vividly relieved against a black background."

When her companion reminded her that in life, as well as in nature, bright days followed dark ones, Laura had answered that one of her best friends had predicted that her ship of life would be shattered against the cliffs, and he probably saw correctly. It must be so; for if hitherto she had managed the vessel badly, it was done, at least, with a firm hand; but now she had lost her steadfastness. Besides, she would bless the hour when the whirlpool swallowed her.

Hartwang had involuntarily nodded a silent assent to the last sentence, but, noticing the speaker's surprise, he said curtly: "The waves will cast the ship ashore again, and there, God willing, it shall receive a safe helmsman."

"That means," cried Frau Helene joyously, "that you will stay."

"It depends upon how I find matters upstairs," replied Hartwang. "The books which I took

yesterday placed many things in a different light. Nothing is truer than the French proverb: 'To understand everything is to pardon everything.'"

"And what do you say of the new moralist?" asked the young widow anxiously.

"That his dithyrambic treatment of the most serious subjects and the most important questions in life at first surprised and bewitched me," was the reply. "But I soon felt disinclined to follow further this rider on a rushing steed, this pursuit of the fabulous. Of course, it soon became evident to me how the heroic impetuosity of this amender of the world can sweep away young souls yearning for unrestricted liberty."

"I, too, once surrendered myself captive to him," the widow answered. "It was his first work, 'The Birth of Tragedy from Music,' a gift from my husband, which fascinated me. What soaring aspiration, what glowing, scintillating fire, what a happy utilizing of the interesting material at his command! And how lofty and novel is the point of view to which he leads us up at his side! Originally—did you know it?—he was a philologist, a favorite pupil of the great Friedrich Ritschl. My husband was a classmate

and heard the revered teacher say: 'If he is not destroyed by his own eccentricity, he will far outstrip us all.' "

"Both predictions were to be fulfilled," said Hartwang gravely. "I have not read the work of which you speak, but what I have seen of Friedrich Nietzsche's writings led me to the conviction that he was born with the seeds of the trouble which so early snatched from his hand his winged pen. Every apostle, however, who proclaims the great watchword of humanity with lofty pathos finds disciples. A strong impulse toward independence, the ardent desire to bid defiance to every obstacle that fettered the demands of her energetic, noble nature, even the barriers imposed by her sex, led our friend to Nietzsche, in whom she probably recognized a kindred soul. How the girl who, from a child, loved and sought solitude, must have assented to the views of the master whose statement that every partnership somehow, somewhere, at some time, becomes base might have emanated from her own soul. And does it not sound as if he was thinking of her when he remarks that many who turned from life only turned their backs upon the rabble? After the higher powers,

to whom she had been taught to look up as the all-merciful guides of life, had closed their ears with apparently cruel harshness to her prayers and pleadings, she turned from them. The materialists agreed with her, and what a discovery it was when she perceived that, by renouncing everything which in her childhood she had been taught to hold sacred, she had gained the right to number herself among the chosen ones of our race, the lordly rulers!

“The restrictions imposed by her birth and position in life had already become at home very irksome; now she learned that lack of consideration and cruelty belonged to the virtues of the nobles. How much censure for trivial offences against the demands of society she had been compelled to endure! Now she was shown that everything is permitted and nothing forbidden to the lordly man who stands above the bounds of good and evil, and that the postulates of the old code of morality must be unheeded. The ancient sceptics had already taught her that nothing was true; Nietzsche repeated it after them, as in his eulogy of solitude—if I had more time I would show you how plainly—he made himself the echo of Schopenhauer.

“To Laura’s master truth had no more existence than good and evil. So away with self-control, which seeks to impose limits upon the mighty impulses of the ruling man. The new morality permits every obstacle, no matter what name it may bear, to be trampled under foot. Its prophet makes short work even of that inward censor of our deeds and feelings—conscience. In accordance with woman’s nature, Laura applied all this to herself and herself alone. No injury to society would have arisen from the unbridled onward rush of her nature, for she strives toward the good and shrinks from the evil of the old system of ethics. But the masses, the masses . . . The ‘splendid beasts of prey’ who follow this new morality would devour one another, like the lions of whom, after their battles, nothing is left except the tails. Who can remain serious or refrain from indignation when he imagines the application of these abortions of a diseased brain? That Laura did not laugh at it, or turn away in anger, is solely because she regarded only what it offered her and her own position toward it. But, for that very reason, it is incomprehensible to me why she did not angrily hurl aside the book, ‘Thus Spake Zarathustra,’ when

she came to the maxim of the noble philosopher, 'When thou goest to a woman, remember the whip.' It can be read there in those very words, and Laura is not apt to overlook even a letter in the books which stir her intellect. Neither is it easy to comprehend that this anything but docile creature kisses the rod like well-behaved children.

"These doctrines, delivered with the utmost authority, nay, with the voice of a prophet, though they frequently do not harmonize with reason—whether they are above or below it is another question—possess the same power of fascination which I have so frequently noticed in the eyes of the insane. I have even seen how the lunatic Marabouts in Northern Africa are permitted to do everything, nay, are even regarded as sacred because something unlike ordinary human reason spoke from their lips and guided their often atrocious acts. Demons possessed them, demons that occupied a place between the Deity and mankind, above us 'sons of the dust.' Laura has long been held captive by this spell, and the rare independence of her position allows her to execute practically what her mind accepts. For this, I think, we should

be grateful, because, while no external obstacle checks thoughts, facts are of a concrete nature. If they encounter others which oppose them, shocks, bruises, and wreckage cannot be avoided. It is the soul that in such a downfall is most sorely injured, and Laura's already bleeds from more than one wound. This, it is true, hurts me also; but, if I see aright, the tempest now raging within her is one of the thunderstorms which purify the air . . . "

Here Hartwang interrupted himself. He had been sitting opposite to Frau Helene in one of the straw chairs in the courtyard, and, with his elbow on the table that separated them, and his head resting on his hand, talked to her in a low tone. She would more than gladly have listened longer, sentence after sentence had seemed to be spoken from his inmost heart, but two gentlemen had approached them, the landlord of the hotel and young Lord Harley. The professor, in the eagerness of his conversation, had not noticed them, and Frau Helene attracted his attention by a gesture of the hand.

It did not enter the modest young widow's head that they perhaps desired to communicate with her. But the landlord brought the noble-

man to the table, and, after presenting him to her and the surgeon, courteously withdrew. The Englishman, by virtue of the silent understanding which unites all civilized people when they have to deal with barbarians, came to make some inquiries.

In the interest and at the request of his cousin, Lady Westmore, he now asked a series of questions about the sheik Faragalla. The lady intended to set out on the journey to Sinai that very day, and, if possible, to go by way of Petræa to Palestine.

Faragalla had been recommended to them as a trustworthy guide and protector, but, before engaging him for his adventure-loving relative, he would like to know how he had behaved as Fräulein Vernissen's companion. He and his cousin had just attempted to see the invalid young lady. The urgency of the preparations which must yet be completed before their departure might, perhaps, have excused the early hour of their visit, but the punishment for their boldness was prompt—they had encountered a positive refusal.

The young lady was making up the sleep which she had lost during the night, and the old

maid-servant, with praiseworthy energy, forbade any disturbance and referred them to her mistress's friend and the professor.

The gay, pleasant manner of the young nobleman's address called forth a similar reply. To Hartwang's inquiry whether the sheik had really determined to leave Fräulein Vernissen and accompany Lady Westmore, Lord Harley answered that the Bedouin, it is true, had only placed himself at his relative's disposal on condition that he succeeded in "having an explanation" with his former employer before evening. At least so the dragoman had repeated in English the statement of the Arabian. In case he could not have this "explanation" in time, Faragalla said, he must renounce the happiness of undertaking the protection of the lady. He, Lord Harley, had discreetly endeavored to fathom what the son of the desert meant by the "explanation," but unfortunately in vain; the sheik, with great skill, had diligently evaded any further explanation. He seemed to cling to the young lady with enthusiastic devotion.

At the last remark a smile, which vexed Hartwang, hovered around the young nobleman's

lips, but Frau Helene described in such glowing colors Faragalla's merits—his heroic courage, his skill in horsemanship, the regard he enjoyed among other Bedouins, the tireless zeal in service which he displayed to Fräulein Vernissen, and also to herself—that it restored the professor's cheerful mood. He could not help thinking of the term "praising him off," current in the circle of his colleagues.

The young nobleman, who was reluctant to have his cousin go to Petræa, received this enthusiastic recommendation with very mingled feelings. But he knew that she would listen to no warning, so it soothed him to have secured for her so reliable a companion.

While he was taking leave of Frau Helene and the professor, little Maud, rosy and bright, came tripping across the courtyard. As soon as Lord Harley had turned his back upon them, she clung to his arm, and Hartwang heard her exclaim with saucy mirth: "I see it in your face. The handsome Bedouin is to go with us. Now, there'll be a real brown fairy prince out of the Arabian Nights among mamma's admirers. But what will Recha, who was

saved from a fiery death, say if the heroic Templar . . . ”

Hartwang understood no more of Maud's prattle; but he saw Faragalla, this time not leaning against the pillar, but surveying the courtyard from the western door. As soon as his eagle eye discovered the professor and his companion, he advanced with a measured step directly toward them.

“Aha!” exclaimed Hartwang. “There comes the wolf, according to the fable! Help me with your good Arabic to discover what he means by his explanation.”

“And still better,” answered Frau Helene merrily, “to persuade him to accompany Lady Westmore as her protector eastward, still eastward, till they reach the place where the sun rises.”

CHAPTER XV.

BEFORE the young widow's last words had died away, Faragalla was standing before the pair, bowing low as he touched his fingers to his brow, his lips, and his breast. He used this form of greeting in a peculiarly expressive way, and with great skill; for he so managed it as to appear as if he intended it solely for the lady, and merely included the Professor because the situation demanded it.

Hartwang understood little of the conversation that followed, while the young widow, who, during the journey, had diligently striven to make herself mistress of Arabic, could not only comprehend, but also reply.

Faragalla had already sought an interview with Laura, but had been most positively refused admission by old Traut. He now declared that it was absolutely necessary for him to have a conversation with his "kind mistress." Then

he boasted of the aristocratic Englishwoman's eagerness to secure his escort, and declared his resolution to fulfil her wish if the "explanation" with his "kind mistress" could be obtained that day.

Here Frau Helene interrupted him to tell Hartwang, in German, what she had learned, and to offer her services as interpreter.

She was now only a former companion, but to him belonged not merely the right, but the duty, of putting an end to Laura's connection with this man.

The Bedouin had watched suspiciously and with evident impatience the words of the young widow, which were absolutely unintelligible to him. When Hartwang informed him that Frau Helene was going to leave her friend that day, but he was in a position to attend to Fräulein Vernissen's affairs, and also to settle the claims which he thought he still had upon her, Faragalla stated, with defiant firmness, that he would receive what more he expected from no hand except that of his "kind mistress." The Professor, however, was equal to this antagonist, and, with a resolution whose unyielding strength was sufficiently plain to the Arabian in the

other's deep voice, he declared that the young lady's health would not allow her to receive any visitors that day. Whether he could be admitted to-morrow would depend upon what he desired of her. If it was only a request for money, he, Hartwang, was ready to satisfy the claim at that moment. He knew his friend's desire to deal liberally with Faragalla.

This acknowledgment produced a wonderful effect, for the Bedouin's handsome face, which had looked very gloomy and threatening, gained an expression of joyous anticipation. His stiff, repellent bearing was transformed into pliant suppleness, while, with animated gestures of the hands, and the air of a modest man appealing to the sense of justice of one more powerful, he set forth what he meant by his "explanation."

Frau Helene put the Arabian's flowery speech into simple sentences as she faithfully repeated to the Professor what Faragalla was trying to convey. In the first place, he admitted that Achmed, the dragoman, had just paid the sum which had been agreed upon as compensation for his escort, but every party that he had accompanied, and for which he did nothing except what had been arranged at the time of the de-

parture, invariably expressed their satisfaction at the end of the journey by a fee which he would shrink from calling by the name of backsheesh. It was absolutely certain that his "kind mistress" had also intended to do this, and, especially during the latter weeks, he had cherished the well-founded hope that the gift would be large in proportion to the good-will, generosity, and wealth of the German lady. She would hardly intend to satisfy him with the double-barrelled gun, the sabre, and the other trifling presents bestowed while they were travelling. Besides, he had done very much more for his kind mistress than mere duty required. He had never served any other tourist in the same way. He had undertaken to do nothing except to protect her and act as guide, and now he called upon Frau Helene to bear witness whether he had not collected plants and stones for her, fulfilled, as the most devoted of servants, every wish that he could read in her eyes. Far be it from him to demand any fixed sum in return. That would be unworthy. The German Tabib* yonder had seen for himself how he bore her out of the fallen tent, from the midst of smoke and flames. No

* Tabib, physician.

exquisite music could charm his ear more than the words of gratitude with which she called him the preserver of her life. He considered it great and undeserved good fortune that Allah had granted him the favor of saving her from death by suffocation. Before that time, during the whole journey, he had striven to guard her as the very apple of his eye. The expression of her own had showed him that she valued his zeal and devotion. The rare favor that she bestowed upon him on every occasion always urged him to still greater endeavor, and if the consciousness of satisfying and pleasing her had awakened bold hopes of a large reward at the end of the journey, surely the "little mistress"—this was the name the Arabian gave Laura's traveling companion, in distinction from her, the "great mistress"—and the Hakim Hartwang would not blame him for it.

The professor would have stopped the Bedouin's flood of eloquence at this point if he had understood what he was saying; but Frau Helene, before again commencing the work of interpretation, permitted him to add that he had remained in Suez at Laura's special request, and almost died of weariness and longing for the

desert, his horses, and especially his wife and child. Daily he had gazed for hours at her windows in the expectation of being summoned to her presence and dismissed with a handsome fee, but always in vain.

These astonishing disclosures at last induced the patient listener to interrupt Faragalla, and tell the professor in German what she had heard. She did this with special pleasure, and rejoiced to see the cheering effect which her communication produced upon the grave man of science. Hartwang had heard enough and put a speedy end to the "explanation" by assuring the Bedouin that his "kind mistress" knew how to appreciate all this and desired to reward his deed of rescue generously. Would his hopes be realized if, in the young lady's name, he gave him at once a hundred Egyptian pounds?

A bitter-sweet smile on the lips of the noble son of the desert informed him that this handsome gift was by no means satisfactory, his expectations had been far greater, and now Hartwang was forced to enter into a strange bargaining, through which the sheik was finally satisfied with twice the sum originally offered.

While the professor went to the office of the

hotel to write the check required to pay the sum granted, Frau Helene learned that Faragalla was already the husband of two wives and the happy father of five children. He had found no occasion to speak to Laura of his harem.

When Hartwang returned with a heavy roll of gold coins, which he handed to the Bedouin, the young widow, shaking her head disapprovingly, exclaimed: "More than 4000 marks!"

"And Laura's life?" asked Hartwang gayly. "I think it was very cheaply bought."

"If it comes under your guidance, certainly," replied the other. "I grudge this trader in love services and tender solicitude his ill-gotten gains as little as the two wives and five children whose existence he has *just* acknowledged."

"Why not?" asked Hartwang. "They will preserve Nietzsche's splendid beast of prey from extinction." Then, turning to Faragalla, who had opened both rolls of money, and was laboriously trying to count the coins, he asked if he might tell the young lady that his expectations were amply satisfied by her generosity.

"Tell my kind mistress," the Bedouin cried enthusiastically, "that she has fulfilled my high-

est expectations and Faragalla will remember her all his life as the 'mother of generosity.' "

Then his black eyes rested on the gold, and never had they glowed with a more ardent light when the princely son of the wilderness assured Laura of the deep devotion of his heart.

Hartwang's proposal that, if the sheik especially desired to thank the young lady personally for her kindness, he might ask if she could receive him that evening, was declined with embarrassed haste. To accommodate Lady Westmore, now that the "explanation" for which he had waited was so quickly and satisfactorily accomplished, he would escort her that afternoon across the sea to the Fountain of Moses, where the tents of the English tourists were already pitched.

Though Hartwang had just desired to prevent another meeting between the Bedouin and Laura at any cost, it now incensed him that the man who had induced her to believe in his passionate devotion could leave her without even wishing to see again and express his gratitude to the woman from whom he was probably parting forever. He, too, felt the slight offered her,

and Faragalla must have perceived, from the manner in which the surgeon and Frau Helene returned his farewell greeting, how little they esteemed him.

"Shameful," cried the young widow as he retired. "All those tender, enthusiastic glances were nothing but the seed from which he expected to reap a rich harvest at the parting!"

But this outburst of indignation was to go no farther; Emil came to take her to the Consulate, where their marriage was to be legally solemnized. Hartwang accompanied her as a witness, but he was prevented from attending the religious ceremony performed in the hotel by their friend, the missionary, by old Traut, who earnestly entreated him to accompany her at once to her mistress.

CHAPTER XVI

PETER ascended the stairs with a light heart, full of joyous anticipation. Whatever errors Laura had committed, whatever wrong she had done him, he loved her at this hour more ardently than ever. On the eve of losing her he had perceived, as he had often done before, that his life without her would be desolate and bereft of its best charm. Since he had first given his heart to the young girl, conflict had followed conflict. He now believed that, by a bold stroke, he had put an end to the most unfortunate of her delusions. As the goal was removed, she could no longer struggle toward it. Besides, she had confessed yesterday that she had loved no one but him until she met her ideal, the "free son of the desert," in whom she beheld the embodiment of all proud, bold, independent manhood. How deluded the poor girl had

been! How much she would need his consolation after such a disappointment!

In the anteroom he learned that his medical assistance would also be necessary; for Traut informed him that Laura had wept violently during the night and did not fall asleep until after sunrise.

If this continued, serious danger might threaten her poor inflamed eye. The convalescence of the body could advance only if he succeeded in healing her mind, and Hartwang came with a full heart to do his best for both.

When he entered the chamber he did not find her on the divan, but in an armchair near a window, from which, notwithstanding his explicit order, the curtain had been partially raised. On the other hand, she still wore, like a dutiful patient, a shade over her eyes.

True, she did not appear to have followed his advice not to use her sight; for on the table before her lay all sorts of letters and papers, and behind them stood several unframed photographs, in which Peter instantly recognized the Bedouin sheik. Laura had taken them with her own camera. One represented Faragalla leaning in a picturesque attitude at the door of the

Odeum of the rock city of Petræa, another showed him on horseback, a third beside the magnificent stallion, with his arm resting on its arched neck. She had evidently feasted her eyes on the handsome man.

"The last meal before execution, or rather a wreath upon his grave," thought Hartwang, while Laura greeted him kindly as a welcome visitor.

He answered her pleasant words with tender warmth, and confessed that he had not been able to make up his mind to leave her in her present condition. Then he examined her eyes. The inflammation, as he feared, had increased. He told her this considerately, earnestly entreated her not to use these precious organs, and pointed disapprovingly to the pictures, papers, and writing materials upon the table.

Laura nodded repentantly, saying, with almost tender cordiality: "How kind you are, Peter! To inspire sympathy seemed to me, from childhood, the most detestable of all things. Even now I certainly do not ask for it, and yet—I cannot tell you what terrible hours I have passed. Oh, these nights! Ever since that horrible accident they transform whatever un-

pleasant things the next day may have in store into the most terrible peril. And others must have the same experience. Else whence comes the saying that night is no man's friend? I thought I had lost you forever, Peter. I believed you had turned your back upon me, with resentment in your heart, and left me to myself. How the idea tortured me! And the telegram on the table. It came just after you went away and robbed me of the last remnant of my composure. But even this was not enough. The long-delayed happiness of my travelling companion gave me real pleasure; but when she at last returned she placed before me the choice of defrauding her of a real favor of fortune, or letting her leave me. There was but one answer, and yet it is ten, a hundred times harder than I would have believed possible a few weeks ago. What is there not concealed beneath her unassuming exterior . . . ”

“Which your keen perception did not discover earlier!” observed Hartwang.

“It is incomprehensible,” Laura answered eagerly. “And I, fool that I was, might have enjoyed and profited by it during the entire journey. Yet . . . ! From pure, nonsensical dog-

matism, perhaps also to be alone in spite of her constant presence, I overlooked her as we do the shadow to which we pay no heed until, like that of the luckless Peter Schlemihl, it is taken from us. Now Fate is using the shears. We must part this very day, and, of all the women in the world, I do not know one, unlike as we are, who could understand me better—so one thing after another came to make my night miserable. How can we sleep when the present is so cruelly poisoned, and the future yawns before us like a deep, open chasm, toward which we are moving as surely as if we were standing upon a loosened block of ice in the midst of a stream?"

Here Peter interrupted her with the exclamation: "But don't you see the hand stretched toward you from the shore? Has it ever been withdrawn from you? Here it is! It is strong enough in itself to draw you to the sheltering land, even though you should disdain to the end to hope for the assistance of higher powers."

Here he suddenly paused in the midst of his warm appeal and, as if he had found a better way, continued with the calmness characteristic of him: "But let us now leave out of the question all that the soul demands and disdains. Let us

merely examine keenly and understandingly what it is that paralyzes your strong will, robs you of sleep and the power to oppose the enemies of your still inflamed eyes. You felt that, if your companion left you, you would be lonely. In your present situation that is, of course, inevitable. I, too, must return home; but before leaving you in such a physical and mental condition . . .”

“Oh, Peter,” she eagerly interrupted, stretching out both hands to him. “If you will stay with me, I can endure even the worst.”

Full of joyous emotion, Hartwang clasped them closely, and then continued more calmly: “This worst, if I except mental experiences with which you must deal alone, can only refer to yonder telegram, which startled you like a nocturnal spectre. If I see clearly, it is connected with the original of the pictures on the table.”

“How sharply jealousy sees,” Laura answered, blushing. “But you have nothing more to fear from him, difficult as it was, and ignoble as it certainly is to give him up, after all I owe him, for the sake of my own peace of mind, and therefore from sheer selfishness. Perhaps this hard resolve will cost the man to whom I am

indebted for the best gift one human being can bestow upon another, the exquisite freshness, the glorious joy in existence that as it were radiated from him as soon as he saw me, if not—would that I may be mistaken—his life. Smile if you choose! What do we know—either you or I—of the fervor of passion which consumes the soul of the Oriental. Let me speak freely, Peter! You have already heard that I tore from my heart every feeling which interceded for the man who is a thousand times more virile, bolder, freer, prouder, and better than the dandies whom your corrupt society admires as its ornament, and whose love the woman who is unwilling to be held up to scorn must reject as if it were a shameful stigma.

“So he stands superior to the tremendous compulsion to which I yield reluctantly, yet which again and again controls me. I see that your values need transformation; but how dare I, a single woman, venture to begin? The time will come when the magnificent recklessness to which a nobler spirit leads the way will conquer. In my position and in this age nothing remains for me except to submit. How shameful would be the interpretation given by society,

if I should obey the best and most eager wishes of my heart and listen to the most ardent love that ever glowed in the soul of man, you, the kindest and the fairest of human beings, showed me yesterday."

"But, Laura," Hartwang warmly interrupted, "can you expect me, your friend, to let you plunge, without raising a warning voice, into the gulf which you yourself see yawning at the end of this road? Now you are withdrawing your foot voluntarily, for you will give up the man whom my lips shrink even from naming in connection with you."

Here a low laugh, accompanied by a gesture of the hand which expressed denial, interrupted the harsh words of Laura's friend. Then, in a tone of superior discernment, she exclaimed: "Of all judges, jealousy is doubtless the most unjust."

"If that refers to me . . ." the surgeon retorted quickly, but Laura cut him short with the exclamation: "For these things at least my eye needs no physician, and Nature does not lack objects of observation. There are the battles of the snipe. Once in a year they assemble. The female bird steps forward. Two males follow,

who fight each other with their sharp beaks till one sinks bleeding on the sand. The other flutters toward the female bird, and she becomes its mate. This zoology taught me, and in just that way you fought with Faragalla, and he succumbed. But, if the prize of battle escaped him he need feel no shame, for he was not robbed of victory by the weapons of a superior antagonist, but by the prejudices of which you know my opinion, and the scruples, increased by your warnings, some of which may be well-grounded in the case of one who desires to live in peace, and feels herself too weak to defy the ban which the great majority would pronounce upon her. The difference in views of life and in culture, which undeniably exists between the son of the desert and myself, perhaps might really have destroyed our expected happiness."

"Not that alone," urged Hartwang. "The Bedouin's disposition would have become the stone of offence."

"What do you know of Faragalla's disposition?" cried the girl indignantly.

"So much," replied the surgeon, "that I dare to assert that I have never met a man who for that precise reason is equally unworthy of you."

“ The battle of the snipes ” fell scornfully from Laura’s lips. “ It would please me better if you used your beak less valiantly against the absent, now that you know that his sentence has been pronounced, now that you must surely have perceived what a pitiably pliant nonentity suffering, fear, the need of repose, and—let me be honest—gratitude have made me. I have never found you brutal and pitiless, therefore I shall scarcely have to entreat you to think in future less scornfully of the vanquished man, when I have told you that the castle on Mt. Lebanon, mentioned in this despatch, was intended to shelter me and Faragalla, whose suit I meant to accept. Read the telegram, and then ask yourself how far you ought to go in the disparagement of one whom the woman you love and desire to wed deemed worthy to marry.”

As she spoke, she held out the paper to Hartwang with quiet dignity.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRAUT, in clearing up the articles found when the ruins of the tent were removed, had discovered the letter which Laura, during the rising of the thunder-storm in the desert, had addressed to the consul in Damascus and, on their arrival in Suez, mailed it with all which her mistress had formerly written.

The telegram sent in reply had gone by way of Cairo, and did not reach Laura's hands until a late hour the evening before. It contained the information that the consul, in his young countrywoman's name, had tried to secure the ruins on Mt. Lebanon, with the mill, the spring, the stream, and the grove of pines. The owner's price was one-fifth less than the highest sum she had authorized. As there was a second buyer, it would be necessary to decide promptly. The bargain would be closed if no withdrawal of the

offer came from her before twelve o'clock on April 26th.

This was the date of the present day, and it was nearly noon.

Hartwang, who had read the telegram carefully, in spite of the displeasure awakened by its purport, curtly and gravely pointed out this circumstance to Laura before making any other comment, but she confessed that just before he entered she had noticed that the right to withdraw from the purchase was practically forfeited.

"Think," she exclaimed, "how monotonously time passed. I do not even know what day of the week it is. What do I care for the calendar? I thought it must be the 25th, or perhaps only the 24th. In less than fifteen minutes—I see it by yonder bar of sunlight—it will be twelve o'clock, and how long will it require for a telegram to reach Damascus?"

"With the precision and speed of the Turkish telegraphic service," replied Hartwang, shrugging his shoulders, "five hours, eight, and, if there should be any hitch, a considerable time longer. So we may salute you as mistress of an estate on Mt. Lebanon."

"Really?" asked Laura in surprise. "Do

you seriously believe that the commission I gave in the desert, under very unusual circumstances, cannot be recalled?"

"If you are ready to submit to a great loss," was the reply, "perhaps so; otherwise, certainly not."

Fräulein Vernissen shook her head thoughtfully, and said, turning to her friend, it is true, yet half to herself:

"How strange it is! If Fate troubled itself at all about us parasites of this earth, we might believe that it was giving me a sign and interfering actively in the course of my existence."

"This belief," the professor interrupted, "is hardly in harmony with your usual views. At any rate, before occupying yourself with supernatural affairs, permit me to write a despatch which will reduce the loss awaiting you to the smallest possible amount."

"Yes, yes," the young heiress replied, pushing writing materials toward him. "See what can be done . . . But hark! The clock is striking twelve. So perhaps I might really be the owner of this little Paradise. You ought to see it. The most exquisite mountain landscape, the wood, and the view from the ancient walls on

which I intended to have the little castle built, in the ravine through which the stream rushes and above which towers snow-capped Lebanon. In this beautiful solitude I had expected to live with Faragalla, like a pair of eagles in their proud, lonely eyrie."

"Fortunately that dream is over," said Hartwang harshly. "But, since it was the consul who concluded the bargain for you, we are, luckily, at least dealing with an honorable man, whom we can . . . But wait a moment. I will first write down what I mean as briefly as possible."

He seized the pen as he spoke, but Laura held out her hand to stop him, exclaiming: "No, no. Perhaps it would be useless trouble. The piece of land has become my property through a strange dispensation of Providence. If the bank pays it, I shall not have a mouthful less bread to eat. At the end of each year I hear how much of my income has remained unused, and thereby the property has increased. When I consider what I owe Faragalla, nay, that I am indebted to him for my life, it seems as though I ought to show him some special proof of my gratitude. How I have racked my brain to find

some suitable parting gift! Now this land on Mt. Lebanon falls into my lap. It is not too far from his home, and, if I afforded myself the pleasure—what other value has my wealth?—of once giving thus from my abundance and thereby arousing in him the faith that the goddess he beheld in me had really descended to him from the heights to adorn his earthly lot.”

“He already has this opinion,” Hartwang, with frowning brows, angrily retorted; “for before entering the service of his new mistress, Lady Westmore, he received from me your farewell gift in chinking coin and showed himself more than satisfied with it.”

Laura started up, exclaiming: “What does this mean?” and, in impetuous excitement, tore the shade from her brow—her blue eyes blazed with the wrath of an infuriated soul. “He has gone, you say, gone, without even taking leave of me? That is making a clean sweep. Castle dungeons no longer exist, but there are other ways of removing a rival from one’s path! ‘Leave that chair—I wish to occupy it!’ Now you nestle among the cushions, thinking that the game is won. Sent away, without even being permitted to say farewell to his worshipped

mistress. You have won a good reputation as a surgeon—as a diplomat, to whom all means are fair, I now perceive that no one can cope with you! But is it so clever a thing to take advantage of the innocent simplicity of a son of Nature?”

“Enough!” cried Hartwang in honest indignation. “My love has willingly endured much against which reason and dignity rebelled.”

“In the future you may be spared this martyrdom,” Laura answered vehemently.

“Enough! No need for more,” he again burst forth angrily; but when he saw how her hand and her delicate lips were trembling, and the inflamed eyes exposed to the harmful light filled with tears, he summoned all his strength to silence the resentment which filled his heart; for he perceived that she deserved pity rather than censure. She had rebuffed him, yet he had returned. It had seemed too hard to give her up, and, because his hope had gained fresh nourishment, because the greatest obstacle in the path to her had been removed, he had once more approached. He had come to win the best she had to give, her heart and hand, and to aid her endangered convalescence; so he controlled him-

self, and, with a significant glance, handed her the shade, but, like a defiant child, she hurled it into the middle of the large room, exclaiming: "I'll take nothing more from the hand that so basely wounded me—nothing at all." As she spoke she pointed to the door, but before he could obey the sign, she went on in a calmer tone: "I will ask only one thing more. I must know how you induced the poor, confiding fellow to leave me so—so . . ."

Insulting as the words could not fail to appear to Hartwang, he had not averted his eyes from Laura while she uttered them. How beautiful she was, with her flushed cheeks and her sparkling eyes swimming in tears! He wished he need not leave her. Yet why might he not succeed in conquering the opposition of this unruly child, now that it was in his power to show her how far her foolish heart had led her astray?

With a calmness which gave fresh nourishment to the wrath in her soul, the surgeon picked up the shade and laid it before her, saying in a tone of explanation: "You are fully justified in asking this question. The Bedouin felt utterly miserable in the absolute idleness of his life in the hotel. An opportunity presented itself

of accompanying another party of travellers through the desert. Their departure could not be deferred, and, after vainly trying this morning to see you to say farewell . . .”

“Which, with some base stratagem, you succeeded in preventing,” she interrupted, with vehement reproach.

“You were still asleep, and Traut did right not to wake you after so bad a night,” the surgeon answered, undisturbed. “But the Bedouin could not, or would not, wait longer, and, as I knew that you desired to reward him handsomely for his excellent service and his deed of rescue, I did so in your name.”

“With beggarly alms you flung to him,” she again cried furiously. “And I know why, too! The proudest of the proud was to be made to appear like a servant. Of course, he did not cast the amount of the settlement, however pitiful it may have been, at your feet. In his princely self-respect, he would have raised no protest even against a handful of dates—what does he care for visible reward? The inadequate, niggardly compensation for a great debt of gratitude disgraced—he felt it—only the giver, not the receiver. And to be forced to say to myself

that he will now, all his life, think of his idolized mistress as a sordid profiteer by his tireless zeal . . .”

“You certainly need have no anxiety on that score,” Hartwang interrupted as she groaned in anguish. “The gift which he received in your name was considerable, to the son of the desert even a fortune. I am to thank you for it most earnestly. He bade me tell you that it surpassed his boldest expectations. He would remember you—these are his own words—as the mother of generosity.”

“Mother of generosity!” cried Laura, laughing scornfully. “And yet your gift seemed to him too trivial even to say ‘thank you’ in person to the giver. But there I wrong him. I know him. Never, never, even had you sent him away with nothing, would he have gone without seeing me again had it not been rendered impossible—Heaven knows by what arts. But he cannot be far away yet. It is still in my power to reward him according to his merits. The land on Mt. Lebanon is my own. He shall have it, with the mill and all. Every step he takes on his new property, every look into the distance, every rest in the shade of his pine trees,

every ripple of the little spring will conjure before his soul the image of the worshipped woman to whose gratitude—what am I saying?—to whose sense of justice he owes it all. You are smiling? Let them both think and dream as they choose, now that land and sea lie between them. Is that what you are thinking? But suppose I don't rest satisfied with it? See how quickly that makes you serious again! Must you not say to yourself that everything bids me not to be content with a mere wish? How often you have appealed to me to believe in a good Providence, or whatever else you call it. And now, when it really does seem as though some mysterious dispensation was seizing the spokes of my wheel of life, when, against my will, it gives me a possession which I had mentally resigned and had resolved to relinquish outwardly, now—I saw it plainly—you are secretly thinking: This strong mind, too, superstitiously takes as a sign from a higher power what is really due to her own negligence! Of course! At the bottom of her heart she is glad that it is too late to countermand the purchase. Now that you wish it to be different, you suddenly consider it impossible that supernatural powers enter my

life. You instantly forget how eagerly you pointed out to me the consolation of faith, and even selected a novel to aid you. That was certainly a clever idea, and it did not remain wholly without effect upon my poor tortured soul, wearied by physical suffering. Besides, any remedy seems desirable to the sick, if it only promises to alleviate the pain. What had benefited me when a child returned to my memory, and again I prayed, ardently, fervently, as in the days when my mother clasped my little hands. I prayed for rest, for peace of mind, for the healing of my burning, smarting eyes, but also for strength to forget the other; I besought Heaven that I might be able to cry, from the fulness of my heart and without reserve, to you who were dear to me and for whose loyal devotion the lonely girl hoped: 'Take me—I will be yours.' And now—instead of having peace, I am more cruelly racked by torturing anxiety than ever, my inflamed eye burns like fire, and you yourself have erected between us two an impassable barrier; for if already, with imperious will and the most culpable means, you trample under foot what to me is worthy . . ."

"I have banished from your presence only

what is as certainly unworthy of you as it would render you miserable," he answered steadfastly. "Consider, Laura. Is it not misunderstanding, with childish shortsightedness, the ruling of the powers governing the world, if we expect them to order every wish to be fulfilled as the echo follows the call? They who behold the connection of things, the past and the future, often lead us by devious ways through darkness and suffering to light and the desired happiness. What we regard as cruel wounds is—how often I have experienced it—only the surgeon's knife, which, by bleeding, brings recovery. Life is waiting, and a thousand times I myself have perceived that the path to happiness leads by the cliffs and reefs of sad experiences. Whoever desires to be saved must die, and the great Healer, Providence, up above, demands from the patient patience, as do we, the little medical assistants here below. As to my interference with your wishes . . ."

"It will utterly fail in its purpose," Laura protested, uninfluenced by the warm appeal of her friend. "Your sermon compels me to compare it with the far worthier doctrine of the free man to whom the future belongs. It leaves patience, submission, humility, and whatever other names

are given to the emotions fatal to every lofty aspiration of the soul, to those who willingly wear the yoke of slavery which the religion of subjection, penitence, and self-torture imposes upon them. Whoever is impelled forward cannot endure it, whoever feels his breast swell with noble pride is degraded by humility to bondage. My unfortunate condition aided you to force me on my knees again, but now—thanks to the lashes you dealt me—I have started up, and once more stand firmly on my feet. I have fettered my own nature and its demands long enough. For the sake of your prejudices, I silenced, with ascetic zeal, the loudest voices of my heart. Regard for you aided me to win the victory in this act of self-conquest, but now our paths separate. I have severed the old ropes and bonds. What I long ago recognized as the highest goal and yet dared not pursue with entire freedom: living out my own nature, without looking to the right or left—nothing shall now prevent me from accomplishing. I will commission the architect to build the little castle on Mt. Lebanon—the sketches must be in yonder portfolio—which before the collapse of the tent I saw before me with every battlement and bow-window completed.

But the man to whom I intend to give it absolutely as a token of my favor and my gratitude . . .”

Here the calmness which Hartwang had maintained with difficulty deserted him, and he angrily interrupted.

“Give the land and castle to any one you choose—the Bedouin, for aught I care—but be content with that; for, I repeat it, he is a base fellow, unworthy to have a high-minded man even take his name upon his lips. If you really wish to attempt what you call living out your own nature, I cannot prevent it—but let him go, have nothing more to do with him, if you shrink from throwing yourself away upon a scoundrel. If you should, nevertheless, persist, you would repent it only too soon in cruelly bitter disappointment. Whatever resentment you may feel against me, you cannot think me untruthful.”

“No!” cried Laura in vehement excitement. “I will believe *you*—but not your jealousy, your hate.”

Hartwang shrugged his shoulders, and, recovering his calmness, answered: “No matter. Only, before you add fresh injustice to your former misconception, permit me to explain quiet-

ly what threatens you if you yield to this unfortunate impulse."

But Laura would not listen to what she knew must inflict fresh pain, and, with repellent firmness, interrupted: "I need no guardian, and will allow no one to malign the man of whose worth I long since formed my own opinion. If I suffer any other person's influence to act upon me, it shall be his, through whose love I hope, even though but for a brief space of time, to be happy."

"After you deny me the power of rendering your existence purposeful and really worth living, by my changeless fidelity and tender affection," replied Hartwang sadly, with downcast eyes.

Laura shook her head in perplexity. The tone of his voice had pierced the depths of her soul. In spite of her wrath, and the tempting visions of the future conjured up by her senses, she had not meant this. Though he now stood in her way, though she was yielding to the passionate demands of her nature, Peter must still remain her friend, her last refuge.

Soothing words were already springing to her lips, but before she uttered them her eyes

fell upon the Bedouin's photograph as he stood leaning against the rock-gate of Petræa in an attitude which seemed to defy the whole world to battle. This incarnation of proud, virile beauty, who was ready at any moment to sacrifice his life for her, had been shamefully slandered and insulted to destroy her yearning toward him. How base it was! The remembrance poured oil upon the dying flames of her wrath, and the strong power of attraction which the Bedouin's handsome person and lofty pride had so often exerted over her was revived with fresh strength by his likeness. "Away with everything that opposes the demands of your nature!" cried a voice within. "Away with the scruples and considerations which hitherto have prevented your draining full draughts of the intoxicating cup of happiness! Want of consideration is one of the characteristics of lordly natures. Whoever, like Peter, throws stones into the life-paths of others, must not complain if the wheels pass over him."

This time Laura listened willingly to the voice which she had so often silenced, and with repellent sternness answered: "Does that question really need a reply after what has happened?"

You settled the fate of a man who was devoted to me, and to whom you knew that I owed a great debt of gratitude, without consulting me—as if I were a helpless child, or already the obedient servant you would fain make me. You did not remind yourself of the wrong you were doing, though you are aware that I claim and need a free path for the demands of my nature. Faragalla will never venture to restrict them. I shall always be to him the worshipped mistress whom he formerly saw in me, while your love threatens unbearable bondage. You are sure of my gratitude for your fidelity, but I cannot become your slave. I did not summon you. If, during our present companionship, you did more for me than your duty as a physician required, I will remember it with all due appreciation. But here our paths separate. This is my answer.”

“Then permit me to leave you,” Hartwang replied coldly. “As to the Bedouin . . .”

“I have already listened to his enemy too long,” cried Laura impatiently. “I will not detain you. I do not fear solitude; for I have found my own way without masculine assistance and chosen for myself a companion on whose protection I can rely. What I owe you, as I said,

will never be forgotten, nor do I fail to recognize your many advantages over the other. Yet what I expect from Faragalla you never granted. German, European society is an abomination to me. The manner in which you tried to rid yourself of a rival shows to what it can lead even an upright man. But the victory remains with Faragalla, and, by acknowledging my love for him before the world, I shall shut myself out from any return to your circles, which are stifling in prejudices, decaying in hypocrisy and falsehood, and, in the tyrannical effort to reduce everything to the same level, striking down or mutilating whatever boldly raises itself above them. How pleasant is the thought of escaping the poisonous breath which emanates from this most ignoble of fraternities, and inhaling in future on free heights the pure air of liberty! Your society—I know that—will point its fingers at me and pronounce its anathema. Let it! How I have felt attracted, driven to go into the desert, and, faithful to myself, laugh in its face; but the old prejudices would not permit it. I scarcely dared to confess to my own soul for what my heart so impetuously longed. Now I will show you and all the world. There will not

fail to be outcries of horror, but even if they stone me, what does it matter if I am free and happy—I will put an end to yearning and restriction. I have already been too long the servant of antiquated maxims.”

“And, instead, you now desire to subject yourself to the tyranny of quickly kindled passions,” cried Hartwang, in angry excitement.

“I will secure them their right,” she answered eagerly, “because I choose to do so, not because they compel my obedience; and know this—what you condemn as passions are really the highest goal! They are the powerful demands of a healthful, warm-blooded nature. To give them their undiminished rights is a virtue—to obey them without dismay or consideration is the duty of the ruling human beings among whom I number myself; wherever they may guide is to me the only right path, because it is in harmony with my inmost nature. If everything does not deceive, this path will lead me to a peerless happiness. You—I see it—are thinking of the wings of Icarus, and already in imagination behold them melt from me and my plunge into the abyss. But let it come. It is better to feel one’s self near the sun for a few

brief moments than to drag for a lifetime through the dust with leaden weights on the feet. You praise the old constraint and are suspicious of progress, and this makes a common goal impossible for us two, and separates us."

Hartwang drew himself up and answered with grave dignity: "I will go, but I shall not bid you farewell. When you long for the cast-off fetters, I shall again be at your service."

With these words he turned his back upon her and with a firm step left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAURA had not wished to see Peter leave her in this way. She wished to call him back and entreat him, whatever fate might be in store for her, not to forget her, to thank him for so many things and propound many a question, whose answers were beyond the power of a Faragalla, but defiant obstinacy and the fear of being once more diverted from the resolution of which she was proud and from which she expected the fulfilment of the ardent desires of her heart, sealed her lips.

When Hartwang had gone she ordered Traut to call Achmed, the dragoman, who came to her promptly. Faragalla, she learned from him, would be in the encampment of tents pitched for Lady Westmore's party at the Fountain of Moses until early the next morning. This much desired information led her to order the Nubian

to seek the Bedouin at once, and repeat, word for word, the message she would give him.

The old man could write, although with difficulty, and Laura therefore dictated what he should tell the Bedouin and made him translate it literally. It ran: "A greeting to Sheik Osman Faragalla from his very grateful mistress. If your heart impels you, before leaving me forever, to say farewell personally, and to hear from my own lips how unwillingly I permit you to depart, and how much I value you, you will be a welcome guest at any time until a late hour of the evening."

Then she ordered Traut to admit Faragalla under any circumstances. If she was asleep she must be waked at once; she had the most important business to discuss with him.

Next, strictly as Peter had forbidden her to write, she sent a telegram to the consulate at Damascus, in which she approved the purchase of the piece of land on Mt. Lebanon, and a second directing her banker to pay the purchase money.

Her inflamed eye more than once refused its service, but with obstinate persistence she com-

pleted both tasks. While thus occupied, a triumphant smile hovered around her delicate lips, and whenever the refractory eye had done its duty for some time she rewarded it with a glance at the photographs of the handsome man whose great passion was to make her happy.

At last, as the pain became more violent, she ordered the room to be darkened and lay down upon the divan to dream of Faragalla and the bliss she anticipated at his side—in the little castle on Mt. Lebanon. But the pleasant visions she expected vanished almost as soon as they appeared, like mists scattered by the morning breeze; for she awaited Frau Helene's return with torturing impatience. The more her eye burned, the more frequently the conviction forced itself upon her that she had been unwise to repel her friend and physician so sharply. The attempt to fall asleep also failed, and when bandages, too, did not alleviate the pain, she requested the old servant to go quietly in search of the professor. If he was still there, she must beg him to pay her a short visit; otherwise the English physician whom he had recommended must be summoned,

She could not expect Faragalla's visit until toward evening. Laura longed for and yet dreaded it. Virginal fear of the fierce man who, as soon as she had assured him of her love, would impetuously demand what, in her present miserable condition she must refuse, overmastered her whole being. If only the meeting could be deferred till, fresh and vigorous, she could rush into his strong arms! She had expected supernaturally exquisite joys from the fulfilment of her yearning, and now that it was so close at hand, she recoiled. She dreaded his embrace. Often, as she mentally repeated that it was solely on account of her illness that she felt as though it would be self-profanation, a hateful, humiliating thing to be clasped by the Bedouin to his heart, to receive and return his kiss, she could not help perceiving that a deeply rooted aversion to any personal contact with Faragalla ruled her. Once it even darted through her mind that, if she wished to remain faithful to herself and her principles, and obey the impulses of her nature, she must now at least close the doors against the Bedouin or avoid him. The die had fallen. She had decided to surrender herself to the man from whose passionate demands her whole nature

shrank, and she could no longer withdraw. Besides, she still yearned for the sight of the handsome man, the most genuine lordly man whom fate had ever led into her path, and his protestation that he could not give her up. If he could restrain his impetuosity, she might anticipate with true pleasure the moment that she could offer the great gift she held ready for him. Besides, she had the power to keep up the barriers which hitherto had held him from her. She was ill and tortured by pain. This was sufficient reason for hesitation, blended with repugnance.

As the door of the anteroom opened Laura flushed and an expression of grateful joy beautified her face. Faragalla could not have arrived yet. She had hoped that, in spite of her insulting rudeness, Peter was returning. But instead of the friend expected with so much pleasure, Traut entered bringing news of the professor's departure. He had paid for his room, taken leave of the hotel proprietors, and just said good-by to her, answering her "till we meet again" with a curt "God grant at home." The English surgeon was in Ismailia, but would return that night, and his wife had promised to send him to her early the next morning. At this message

Laura turned pale and told the maid to call the Frau Doctor—she needed her.

Hartwang really had packed his trunk and left the hotel, but instead of setting out on his journey, he went to stay with his old college classmate, the consul, in Suez, where he met Frau Helene, who had come with her newly-wedded husband for their papers. Firmly convinced that she, too, had Laura's welfare at heart, he begged Emil to grant him a short conversation with his bride.

As soon as they were alone, the surgeon confided to her what had occurred between him and his young friend. Though he had obeyed the excited girl's command to leave her, he intended to stay in Suez. Laura was too dear to him to leave her in the lurch in her present condition, and on the eve of so great a danger, because she had wronged him. She would need him only too soon as a physician for the body as well as the mind. Traut had promised not to tell her of his presence in Suez until she urgently desired his assistance.

In reply to Frau Helene's inquiry why, in order to cure Laura promptly and thoroughly of her foolish delusion, he had not told her plainly

what they had learned that morning of Faragalla's true character, he answered curtly: because it seemed possible to cure her by less painful means. The full truth would have been too strong a medicine for the suffering, irritable girl, who was utterly unprepared for it. Besides, he would not regret it, if she really did pay the cost of the land on Mt. Lebanon as the price of experience, for it was his duty to think also of the convalescent's future. If she learned what a base game the man whom she deemed worthy of the highest of all gifts had played with her, it might leave in her soul a sting which could only too easily cloud the beautiful candor of her life. Self-humiliation seemed to him too dear a payment for the speedier recognition of her error. He had the possibility in his power of convincing her of her mistake, should it become necessary. How considerably this could be effected must depend upon circumstances.

Frau Helene found it difficult to comprehend this gentle treatment of the deluded girl. She was horrified at the thought that Laura's obstinacy, in spite of her friend's tender solicitude, might lead her into the Bedouin's arms, though only for a short time. She had little fear of the

passionate demands of her nature. Laura had reflected upon them so much that their elementary power, if it had existed at all, must have experienced great disheartenment. This conviction soothed her, yet, on the other hand, she felt exasperated that the blinded girl could have preferred the Bedouin, even for a short time, to so distinguished a man and true a friend.

She frankly accused Hartwang of unduly delicate consideration, and expressed her fear that the gentleness love dictated might harm Laura and prevent her from putting a speedy end to her pitiable delusion; but he persisted that his course was the right one. He had no time, however, to explain his reasons, for Frau Helene's sister called her back to her relatives.

The latter took leave of her new friend and returned to the hotel, where, after discussing and arranging many things with the others, old Traut appeared, soon after sunset, to summon her to Laura. The maid had already tried several times to fulfil her mistress's order, but in vain, and she was now glad to find her; for the young lady was so restless that she could remain on the divan no longer. She had already drawn

the curtains back several times and looked out over the sea, but the person expected—Traut could imagine who it was—had not yet appeared.

Frau Helene followed the maid anxiously. But she no longer found Laura alone in the apartment, now dimly lighted by a shaded lamp. She was standing near the door, close to the old dragoman, holding him firmly by the breast of the long cloth coat which he wore over his thin Arab costume. Her face was flushed, and the two women had heard her angry voice outside the door. Frau Helene saw, both in her appearance and the Nubian's, how harshly the messenger was blamed for an unwelcome message. She felt sorry for the old man, but Laura gave her no opportunity to intercede. As soon as she saw her she exclaimed in the utmost indignation:

“And I am to believe this! I have had it repeated for the third time! Always the same words! And yet—it cannot be. I noticed long ago, Achmed, that you did not hear very quickly—this cannot, cannot be Faragalla's answer.”

“Yet the dog of a Bedouin sent you nothing more,” protested the Nubian firmly, with his

hand upon his heart. "Besides, the words were put on paper, and I showed the writing—not a stroke or dot was omitted."

"And you gave him my message word for word, precisely as I dictated it?" asked Laura excitedly; and, before his scanty English allowed him to reply, she added threateningly: "There was many a quarrel between you and the sheik, and he was a thorn in your flesh—I know it. Beware of departing even a finger's width from the truth, for I shall learn all, and, if I find you guilty, I will brand you as a cheat in the recommendation for which you asked me, spite of the good service you have rendered."

"Do so, lady," replied the old dragoman, as if sure of his cause. "I translated your invitation as accurately as if we were standing in the presence of the judge, and my memory is good—it retains his answer as clearly as the names of my own children."

"Yet he *must* be mistaken," Laura repeated wildly, turning to Helene. "Tell me yourself whether he does not misinterpret Faragalla's message. I asked—no, entreated him to come to me to receive a farewell from my own lips. The trip would scarcely have consumed an hour.

And what is he reported to have answered? Repeat it to us again, Achmed."

"He said," replied the dragoman, "that he had duly received what he had to ask. He was now accompanying another lady, and it was not proper to leave her alone on the eve of departure to please his former employer."

"And was that all?" Frau Helene asked in her turn. "Think, Achmed."

"All," answered the Nubian, and Laura dully repeated: "All!" Then she laughed shrilly, and, meeting the disapproving glance of her travelling companion, said bitterly: "You, for whom I had just formed a sincere friendship, are going, Hartwang has already started, and Faragaila . . . Shameful, abominable! It is enough to drive one mad!"

Then she paced up and down the room with long strides till, pausing suddenly, she struck her left hand upon her right and burst out impetuously in German: "And yet it cannot be. There is false play, and Peter, perhaps, even with a good intention, shuffled the cards."

"And you attribute that to a man whose honest nature you have tested a thousand times?" Frau Helene interrupted with grave reproach.

"Wounded love, jealousy, pedantic whims," replied Laura in a tone of superior knowledge. "He does not care for the means if only the object is gained. He did not even bestow upon me a farewell message. And to think that I entered the snare with closed eyes, just as was desired. True, he was zealously aided. There is something about him which inspires confidence and makes people wax in his hands. You, too, would have gone through fire for him. Did you, too . . . Yet no! I will not believe it. But the old Nubian yonder was easily won. He, like all small souls, felt uncomfortable in his own humble pettiness compared with Faragalla's manly pride. They all hated him. But I will rob them of their easy triumph and make myself the advocate of the slandered man. The sun set only half an hour ago . . ."

With these words she struck loudly on the brass bell of the little tamtam on the table. Traut instantly obeyed the familiar summons. Laura, with quivering lips, ordered her to go down and tell the proprietor that she wanted to use the steam-launch of the hotel at once.

Then Frau Helene went to her and whispered with impressive earnestness: "You wish to

seek the Bedouin, but you will not do so, Fräulein Laura, until you have learned what can no longer be withheld. This voyage across the sea, in the cold air which follows sunset, may cost you your eyesight. But something even more precious is at stake here."

Then turning to Traut, she went on quietly: "Wait a little while. Perhaps the young lady will defer the trip until later. We have several things to discuss before my departure."

The old maid-servant looked inquiringly at her mistress. But the latter only said: "Wait, then—but remain within call."

CHAPTER XIX.

TRAUT silently withdrew.

The dragoman remained standing at the door, passing a worn, shabby book from one hand to the other.

“What more do you want?” Laura asked imperiously. But the Nubian modestly entreated her to write the recommendation in the book and dismiss him from her service. The journeys through Palestine and Syria had begun long ago. She no longer needed him, and, if he did not get employment now, he would lose the season. He was negotiating with an English gentleman who understood Arabic and, with three friends, would form a desirable travelling party.

“Then let him go,” Laura answered angrily. “He will find another dragoman. As for you, the contract obliges you to remain in my service as long as I choose, and I do not choose to dismiss you yet. For,” she added in a gentler tone,

“whether you allowed yourself to be persuaded by another to deceive me or not will be proved soon enough. The profit of the season, however, shall not be lost to you on my account. Let me know to-morrow what you would have received for taking charge of the Englishman’s party.”

The Nubian kissed her sleeve submissively and left her, well satisfied, but Laura exclaimed to Frau Helene: “I will at least keep *him* near me. True, he is as useless here as possible, but his face is a familiar one, and that is valuable to me now. Besides, with these people money will buy everything. If I open my hand wider than Hartwang, he will certainly betray who is keeping Faragalla from me. You witnessed this man’s touching devotion to my person.”

“And,” Frau Helene added, “this morning I would have believed this answer from the Bedouin as little as yourself ; but now, Fräulein Laura . . .”

“Now,” cried the latter furiously, “I must have deceived myself, and you, too, belong to the conspirators who have resolved upon the exploit of saving from drowning the friend who probably merely desired to take a bath.”

Then the other could no longer control herself. Not only from the consciousness of the wrong inflicted, but in the honest conviction that, by pitiless frankness, she was fulfilling a duty imposed by gratitude, and thereby atoning for what Hartwang's undue gentleness seemed to her to have neglected, she exclaimed:

"Your illustration is as untrue as your insulting words. Yes, you ventured into the flood; but it is by no means a harmless bath. You will not perceive the whirlpool that is already beginning to bear you away. Should we, who *do* see it, be true friends, if we did not warn you against it? I owe you a debt of gratitude, Fräulein, on my mother's account, and during the last few weeks I have become attached—strongly attached to you. And yet! Even at the risk of clouding your remembrance of me I must be frank, for the happiness of your life is at stake. There is probably not a single word lacking in the answer which Achmed brought you from the Bedouin. Since Faragalla was generously paid for his services and his rescue—this is the explanation of it—he no longer thought it worth while to send his former mistress even a farewell message. It required all his powers to gain a

similar gift from the present one. No one—as truly as I hope to be happy in my new marriage—wasted a word or stirred a finger to estrange the son of the desert from you. It was not even necessary; he ceased to think of you as soon as he could no longer expect to receive payment for doing so. Every service he rendered you on the journey, every enthusiastic glance with which he expressed his ecstatic rapture, had no other purpose than to enlarge the gift of honor, as he himself calls the farewell present which apparently all to whom he accords his protection bestow upon him. When he could reasonably expect nothing more, and the professor had promised to satisfy him, he declined his invitation to bid you farewell in person. There is no room in this base soul for even the regard of a friend. As many a scribbler adds line to line to increase the fee, he reckons one service, one word after another, and, if chance permits, includes an act of rescue to enlarge the number of gold coins handed to him at parting. You yourself, while we were in Egypt, made me notice how often the Mohammedan only called to us his “Backsheesh, sir” to spare himself the disagreeable necessity of giving us, whom he despises, one of the beau-

tiful devout salutations and good wishes bestowed upon his co-religionists. Where the Mohammedan can hope for gain from us, he will, it is true, sell us his services, but, on the other hand, it never enters the mind of any one of them to grant the Christian man or woman even the poorest fraction of his spiritual life; nay, should he do so, he would render himself guilty of apostasy. Faragalla's conduct toward you compelled me also to see in him a white raven, glowing with the highest passion for a Christian maiden; but, though he is a better actor, this miserable fellow differs from the rest in nothing except perhaps his rare beauty and aristocratic bearing. If this tradesman in good offices is capable of any tender feeling, he probably devotes it to the two wives whom he married nine years ago and the family growing up around him, whom he acknowledged with paternal pride."

Hitherto Laura had not interrupted her travelling companion even by a word, but her face had sometimes blanched, sometimes flushed crimson to the brow. Now it confronted Frau Helene with the livid whiteness of the glacier from which the after-glow has faded. The cor-

ners of her mouth twitched painfully till the last disclosure forced from her lips an indignant "enough."

Laura was perfectly familiar with her companion's character, and knew that the cautious, truthful woman could prove every one of the numerous accusations with which she loaded the Bedouin. The idol on which she had fixed her heart, and for whose sake she had slaughtered the best and highest blessings, a good man's loyal love and tender solicitude, lay shattered. She felt as if something base and vulgar had polluted her soul, and, as if utterly prostrated, clutched with her trembling right hand the back of the chair at her side.

Then Frau Helene perceived that the remedy she had administered, though effectual, was indeed, as Hartwang had anticipated, too strong for the power of resistance of one who had not yet fully recovered from severe suffering. She tenderly tried to soothe her, and offered her arm to help her to the divan, but Laura declined her aid by a slight shake of the head. Then she pressed both hands upon her brow as if to calm her bewildered brain, and seemed to succeed, for after a brief silence she asked the question:

"And Peter—did he know all this, too?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"And did he know it," Laura continued, "before he came to me, before the telegram from Damascus—I mean before he was here for the last time and I forced him to leave me?"

"He settled the Bedouin's demands this morning," the other answered. "I acted as interpreter, and, in doing so, we both learned what I should have preferred to keep from you, yet which . . ."

"Yet which," Laura repeated with newly awakened energy, the chair on which she leaned shaking under her hand, "for a hundred reasons should have compelled him to show me the truth in all its horrible blackness. Instead, he left me in the dark, and this—to use his own simile—on the verge of the abyss. It makes me giddy even to think of . . . Please help me to the couch. My hands are trembling so. No, no—you are not strong enough to support me. I'll stay here in the chair . . . But Peter—how could he, who is usually a sensible man . . ." Here she hesitated and then burst forth indignantly: "If I should be forced to think that, to punish me for my obstinacy, he in-

tended to expose me to the most horrible misery, the most unheard-of disgrace! If he meant to do this—Helene, great as is the debt of gratitude I owe him, much as I cared for him, I would hate him as my most cruel foe. I should be capable in cold blood . . .”

“Stop,” Frau Helene firmly interrupted. “Only the terrible agitation through which you have just passed makes it possible to comprehend how you could so cruelly misunderstand your friend’s intention. And how you look! Grant yourself a little rest. I will go and give you time to collect your thoughts. When the tempest in your soul subsides—we will say in half an hour—I will return and devote the rest of my time to you. I’ll first call Traut, that you may lean on her arm—then I’ll leave you alone—it will do you good.”

But Laura stretched out both arms, exclaiming anxiously: “Anything but that, Helene! Stay! If you leave me now, I shall lose my reason. How my heart is beating! What a seething and tumult there is in bosom and brain! When I know what Peter’s object was in using this cruel harshness, I shall be calmer within. But now—tell me yourself! What name shall

we give the man who lets another sleep on in a burning house in order not to disturb his rest?"

"He would have shouted the cry of warning at the right time," Frau Helene answered positively. "He thought that the speedier explanation of the error would be too dearly purchased at the cost of the feeling of degradation which it threatened to leave in your mind. These are almost his own words. He wished to act—if I may make the comparison—like the loving father who carries the sleeping child out of the burning house, and, even after the rescue—because it is ill and excitable—conceals the great peril to which it was exposed."

Laura's troubled face brightened and, nodding assent, she murmured in a low, loving tone: "Peter."

Then, with a long sigh of relief, she begged her companion to lead her to the couch. After Frau Helene had arranged the cushions under her head and induced her to apply fresh bandages, she kissed Laura's hair, saying: "Now you please me. To doubt this friend was your greatest injustice, and, thank God, you will do so no longer. Besides, I know it—you would have

perceived what you possess in him long ago, had not . . .”

“Let that pass,” Laura interposed beseechingly. “I wish and need to hear nothing more of this disgraceful overthrow.”

“And nothing is farther from my desire than to add a fresh cruelty to the one I was compelled to inflict. Let this dead have no resurrection. I was going to remind you of another, greater, far more dangerous tempter—the man whom you often and gladly called your master, and whom I, if he could accept the invitation, would fain summon here to show him what fruit his seed bears, even when he scattered it in a soul of noble aspirations, panoplied by talents and education against a thousand perils to which base natures succumb.”

“I know whom you mean,” cried Laura. “But you showed me how strongly his Titanic boldness contradicts your calm nature. You will never be able to do justice to this mighty man. So let us say nothing about him and his writings. To discuss him would cast a needless shadow on our last meeting.”

“And this must not be,” Frau Helene eagerly

responded, "now that our paths are separating. Mine leads me to the dark quarter of the world, where we are to build our nest, and you know how many victims this Africa demands. Perhaps our present interview will be the last, dear Laura, and I should not like to part without leaving you a heritage from which I hope for some benefit to you. I beg, as the last favor granted the prisoner before execution, that you will do me the favor to listen a few minutes."

The girl nodded assent readily, and Frau Helene began: "One thing you must admit in the beginning—I am familiar with the new morality. As my first husband's secretary, I was obliged to devote myself to it far more than I desired. How it repelled me, you know. My courage in confessing it estranged you from me. But the last few weeks have made amends for that, and I feel that I am your debtor, now that I am leaving here to accompany the man to whom I ought and probably can offer more than to you."

"Then you must be much, very much to him," Laura interrupted with cordial warmth. "I am no longer the self-reliant champion who needed no assistance and no support. How

shall I, deserted, tortured by physical suffering and wild doubts which shook to their foundations all things that recently stood firm within me, thrown from my balance, degraded, humbled, crushed as I am, succeed at all in continuing to bear this wretched life without you?"

"That, dear Laura, is exactly what I desired to show you. Fear no moral or philosophical lecture. What could you, so much more gifted in intellect and energy, gain through my instructions? But our lives ran in channels so entirely different that perhaps it might be worth while to cast a glance at both. However Fate robbed you, it left you absolute freedom and a trustworthy friend, on whose loyal devotion you could rely. That is a great deal, Fräulein Laura. I showed you, not long ago, how life looks to the poor girl who, after her childhood has been stunted by continual study, is compelled to renounce every free impulse, the companionship of her own family, nay, even the happiness of love, and bow obediently and unresistingly to employers who are greatly her inferiors in intellect and culture, refinement of feeling, and wealth of knowledge. To you, all that I told of them was a melancholy, almost incredible message

from distant worlds. It even seemed to you well nigh incomprehensible that, to escape this misery, so many cry out even to the unloved man who woos them, the 'do with me as you choose' which the drowning call to the approaching rescuer. For these step-daughters of Destiny there is but *one* of the many paths which open before the well-endowed. Often the stoniest is welcome, because it promises to protect them from hunger, perhaps also from ruin and disgrace. What wonder if these miserable beings, when they grow old, forget to gaze into the distance and limit the aspirations of their minds! Whoever constantly dreads losing the narrow path under his feet must give up gazing freely around on all sides. But you! Where others must thankfully accept, you are permitted to choose. Even toward the best you are free to ask whether he fulfils your demands. You industriously cultivated them, and, when a Hartwang offered you his love, and the goodness of Heaven permitted you to love him in return, you did not consider what you could be to him and grant him, but only how far the union would benefit the claims you made on life. Of these you placed highest the free disposal of your own

person and the unlimited exercise of your will. It was necessary to maintain this, even at the risk of dealing love a death-blow. Ah, there was so much within your grasp which promised to afford satisfaction to your mind, heart, and soul, and offered compensation for the doubtful happiness of marriage! He who said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' no longer speaks in your life."

"Who tells you so?" Laura interrupted in a tone of denial. "Nietzsche calls Him who died upon the cross 'the only Christian.' But wholly apart from him, during this last terrible period, I have often thought of the Saviour's gracious figure and gentle wisdom. Just now, in that frightful waiting, I understood for the first time why He calls the simple-hearted wise. What had made me so wretched as the perpetual thinking and pondering how my life was to be shaped, as far as possible, according to the demands of my own nature! Had I, with childlike freedom from care, lived in the present, how much sorrow would have been spared me, and I, too, would have profited by the Saviour's promises. There certainly is scarcely a more sympathetic figure in history. The beautiful enthusiasm with which

He sacrificed His young life to show the world how sincere He was in His doctrine of love has often exalted my soul. What is grander than to die for an idea!"

"To *live*, not only for one's own salvation, but that of others," replied Frau Helene. "True, the contrary appears to be the highest goal of the new morality; for it requires one's own ego to be placed above everything else, and a short time ago I saw you ready to act according to this command. But love will allow itself neither to be won nor destroyed according to the precepts of a moralist. So, though you had renounced him, you remained bound by a thousand ties to the man who seemed to threaten what you called your liberty. You gave me ample opportunity to prove this. But I also know what induced you to place the handsome son of the desert, who in reality could give you very little, so far above the tested, beloved friend. How gloriously all the demands of the morality of the ruling race were united in this handsome man, who lacked nothing except fair hair to number himself among Nietzsche's magnificent beasts of prey: stern pride, bold contempt of danger, and, in contrast to the pitiful humility of the slave,

the utmost independence! You found an opportunity to try the qualities of both, and the ruling man was buried and even denied the right of resurrection.

"The choice is made. For, since you have perceived how shamefully you have been led astray in this one province; you would do wisely to trust the evil guide no longer; the brilliant fireworks with which he awakens the admiration of the spectators can scarcely serve, by their rockets and Roman candles, to point out the path of any one in actual life. They cannot even act as a will-o'-the-wisp."

"That is going too far, Frau Helene," Laura interposed in an irritated tone.

"By no means," replied the other quietly. "Hartwang proves how little he resembles Fargalla and other such men in their rude inconsiderateness, in refusing to turn you, Fräulein Laura, from the false apostle by informing you that his mind lapsed into incurable lunacy. He would not startle your troubled soul with this news. I do it as I show you the true image of him from whom it was necessary to separate you forever. My prediction that the eccentric revolutionist, whose erroneous doctrine you valued

as lofty revelations, would end thus, estranged you from the companion; but it is not because I wish to prove myself right, but because I desire to serve you, that I administer this medicine. A time will come when you, as well as I, will think of vain delusion when we meet one who also strove to become a ruling man. Merciful Heavens! How much is required to render us worthy merely of the name of human beings and of fulfilling the duties which it imposes upon us? May God preserve us from intercourse with so-called Over Men. It cannot fail to urge us to cling to the others whose qualities can be embodied in no one more beautifully and distinctly than in your lover."

Here Frau Helene paused and waited vainly for an answer from the girl, usually so ready. Laura, with laboring breath, lay pressing her hands upon her face, half hidden among the pillows.

CHAPTER XX.

FRAU HELENE broke the silence which had followed her last words by saying, in a tone of the warmest affection: "The destruction is hard for me, too, Laura, and I know how painful it is to give up beloved convictions. But I had also something to put in their place, and you will allow me a word about your future life."

Laura raised her head slightly, saying: "Pray speak. I don't know—I feel like a shipwrecked sailor cast naked and bruised upon the shore. The vessel to which I had voluntarily trusted myself has long seemed leaky, and I often began even to suspect the helmsman. You merely expressed what was constantly becoming more distinct in my mind during these last trying days. True, I should have imagined that the memory of the voyage, and the remembrance it would leave in me, would prove less painful. You are

a stern physician, who does not spare steel and fire, Frau Helene."

"Just wait," answered her companion with cheerful confidence. "My healing art is certainly not the most delicate, but it has one point in its favor. I take my prescription from no book, but my own personal experience. Dear me, the clock is striking nine—I must be brief, for the ship sails at eleven, and my husband will be waiting for me impatiently enough."

"Not on my account," said Laura gratefully.

"No, to please myself," the young wife protested, "for I should like to bid you farewell with some peace of mind. After so many episodes, kind Fate made me here the wife of my first love. If we could have foreseen this, the renunciation would have been less hard. You already know my painful life as a governess, from which my first husband rescued me. I became his wife, and at first there was much, very much to overcome. Then he was attacked by the lung disease to which he succumbed, and, from the hour he felt he needed me, and in which I could tell myself that I was necessary to a fellow-mortal, I became a happy wife. A look of gratitude rewarded every service, and when it became neces-

sary to sacrifice my sleep at night to serve him my strength doubled, for the sufferer had won what the man in health had vainly desired, and which had been made more difficult to gain by my remembrance of him for whom my heart first throbbed faster. In those days I learned that nothing renders us happier than to be of some real use to another, and that giving is really more blessed than receiving. You, dear Laura—I must repeat it—for a long time placed *yourself* above everything else. I willingly admit that it was done in the higher sense; for what you claimed first of all was the development of your own restless intellect, and your tireless care that no obstacle should be placed in the way of the demands of your independence-loving nature.

“ You punished with aversion the society that restricted your freedom, and finally turned your back upon it, before you had lovingly or even fairly examined how all its parts were constituted. Will you not try it once more? Hartwang knows it, and it is in his power to open the doors of all its various circles. There, even in the lowest strata, which you did not know because you saw them share none of your aspirations, you will find much that is worthy of your

approval. Step by step, an opportunity will be afforded to do and to grant something to others. If you offer this lovingly, answering love and thereby true spiritual satisfaction will be your reward. The watchword living out one's own nature, which you have so often and so gladly played out as a trump, never pleased me in the meaning which it has obtained among modern women, not even on your lips, Laura. Give back to it the beautiful significance which is in harmony with woman's nature, and say to yourself that the right living out herself would be for woman to place the powers under her control at the service of others—first her husband and children—then the many who seek counsel, sympathy, and aid. To do this with loving devotion is for woman—and therefore for you—following her true nature; you, too, you will confess it to me, have a heart wide open to pity; you, too, who battled so bravely for the right and the perfect development of your own individuality, will call forth—when you devote the great intellectual and material resources at your disposal to the new purpose of caring for your neighbors—a wealth of happiness and blessing, and see flowers bloom and fruits ripen on the arid soil where no

dew fell except bitter tears. How joyfully Hartwang will aid you in this work, how rich an opportunity to exercise it his profession will afford you! The more you do for those to whom society has arrogantly denied the right of belonging to its ranks, the higher you will stand above it, the nearer you will come to Him whose touching figure—you have just confessed it—remained dear to you, Who, during His earthly pilgrimage, modestly desired to be only a Man—no Over Man, since He called Himself the ‘Son of Man,’ who opened His arms to the weary and heavy laden, the poor, the simple-hearted, and most of all to ‘the children’ to draw them into the most loving of hearts. His doctrine, you were told, had made men slaves. I think if its true meaning is followed, it will render them brothers and sisters. Not he who in vain aspiration to become a ruling man raises himself above his neighbors, but he who feels himself united to the least, and, as a child of the same Father, forgets himself to lighten with his best powers the common lot in life, will learn, when he listens to the voice of conscience, whose judicial power no philosophy, not even that of your apostle, can argue away, that he chose the right path. Is it

not strange, Laura—and yet it is actually so—that he who makes the grief of the whole world his own enjoys a higher, purer happiness than he who is only mindful of satisfying the wishes of his own petty self?

“Try to forget yourself again. Devote to others the rare strength which is your peculiar possession, and begin the new love-life by rendering the man whom you love best happy. He will teach you to find those who need you most. To labor for them with so much zeal that not an hour in the day will remain unoccupied is the ‘living out one’s own nature’ which I mean. Understand it in that sense, then Hartwang will easily be reconciled to the motto. Will you try it, while I am still here?”

Then a loud exclamation burst from the girl’s lips as, sitting erect, she cried: “So, in spite of all, he remained with me? Yes, yes, yes, he is here! I see it in your face! And you don’t know how shamefully I offended him.”

“But I can imagine,” replied the other, smiling significantly. “We, who cling to the old morality and the Christian faith which the new one terms a slave religion and holds up to scorn, we know the saying about the love which endures

and suffers everything, that was given to us by another true apostle. Where love is genuine, as in the case of your faithful Eckhart, it proves itself gloriously. Do you wish to see him again, Laura?"

The latter, blushing deeply, nodded, and, as she lowered her eyes to the floor in embarrassment, her features, usually so defiantly independent, gained so sweet and girlish an expression that her older friend could scarcely avert her eyes from her. At last she turned toward the door to summon Traut, but, finding the anteroom empty, prepared to go in search of Hartwang herself.

"I am going for him," she said to Laura. "He went to the Consulate to keep watch on you and await his office of guardian. Had the Bedouin accepted your invitation, your friend, as you may imagine, would have remained no idle spectator. If he obeys your summons now, he will not do so solely as a physician. Have you any conditions to propose this time also?"

Laura calmed herself and exclaimed: "Only one: to forget that I ever imposed any, and tell him that, if he comes, he must do so never to leave me again. Say to him also, that I should

not defend myself even if he used the red-hot iron which you so energetically applied to every fault of the deluded one, I know with how good an intention. But will you, whose moments before departure are now numbered, really go to him?"

"Will I!" cried Frau Helene; "why should I give up to another what is perhaps the pleasantest errand in my whole life? As to the red-hot iron, I will more than gladly give it to the professional man. It was hard enough for me to wield. But you look as if it might be thrown among the old rubbish this very day without injury."

With these words she left the room, but Laura rose from the divan, and, as soon as she found herself alone, threw up her arms and drew a long breath, as if relieved from the burden of a hundred weight. Then a wave of feeling surged hotly within her. Sobbing aloud, she threw herself on her knees before the divan, while from her lips in tones low, but full of fervent warmth, escaped the words: "I thank Thee, and again I thank Thee." She felt as though she was rising from a purifying bath in a crystal river,

whose waves were bearing away everything that had sullied, disfigured, and degraded her before she entered the water. She had not seemed to herself so clean, so light, for many years. Even her aching eye disturbed her very little. Peter was coming soon, and hand in hand with him convalescence. She thought of the Christmas festival of the poor children in the hospital, and fancied she again saw Peter take the little lame girl with the bunch of flowers in his arms and kiss her. The children's gratitude, he had told her so himself, was a beautiful reward for his labor. Why could not she, too, win the love and thanks of the little ones? She had always liked to see them, but never busied herself with them. If a child had now put its little arms gratefully around her neck, she would have been perplexed to answer the question: for what? But the time should come when she would not need to ask herself why the children were fond of her. Already the wish to earn their love helped her. How had her ceaseless solicitude for her own individual self and its rights been repaid? Her struggles and aspirations had ended in the most shameful delusion. Shipwrecked,

scarcely worthy of her own pity, the future had appeared like a thorny path in which she dreaded to set her wandering foot.

What had happened that her future life now seemed so utterly different? Even her room and the objects in it had apparently gained an altered, more friendly aspect. She noticed for the first time the flowers on the mantelpiece, yet they must have stood there since early morning. She had just been shivering constantly, the atmosphere was so wintry. But roses were still blooming, and Spring must soon come. As the dawn of morning announces the approach of daylight, a new life-goal now glimmered before her. The mortal terror, which had just agitated her soul so frightfully, had opened organs which showed her the present and the future in a newer, fairer light. The tree of her aspirations lay at her feet, a heap of dust and splinters, but her pathway was adorned with fresh, luxuriant leafage. She could not help thinking of her mother and her own childhood. Strange! It seemed as if the latter did not belong to the past, but to the future. She, with her thoughtful nature and eager thirst for knowledge, had so soon ceased to be a careless child. She longed fervently for

the simplicity which had been so early choked and stifled by independent thought and foreign doctrines. She was still sure of finding it only among children, and as she again recalled Hartwang's favorite spot, her eyes suddenly sparkled with a brighter light. The idea of founding a children's hospital of her own, and devoting herself entirely to it, had entered her mind. As if she had not already accomplished far more difficult things for herself! "I will begin the new living out my own nature to the end with these little suffering creatures," she said to herself. "They are most in need of aid, and Peter, and the great loving Friend of children, Who summoned the little ones to Him, will help me."

Then, raising her hands and eyes heavenward, she cried: "Thou supreme, unselfish Fulfiller and Proclaimer of Love, aid me."

With this prayer, joyous confidence filled her heart, and she continued it with silent fervor; for the feeling had taken firm possession of her being that she was addressing no hollow nonentity, but the best and loftiest power, which she had so often imagined at the end of her own historical investigation: the source of all things,

the Creator and Preserver of the world—Eternal Love.

At last she rose, gratefully and joyously agitated, as if the gracious Power without and within her, to which Peter had so kindly, yet vainly, directed her, had drawn *her*, too, to its heart.

It seemed like a miracle when she, who had just felt too weak even to reach the couch with the aid of a supporting arm, stood firmly on the floor and walked to the fireplace at the other end of the long apartment. While doing so, she held in her hand several papers of different sizes: Faragalla's photographs. Her fingers were too weak to tear the cards on which they were mounted, and the hearth had long been unused. But she was determined to destroy these mementoes of the most severe humiliation which she had ever experienced. So Traut's entrance was welcome, and the old servant had rarely obeyed an order more willingly than the one to burn the Bedouin's likenesses. Soon a bright fire was blazing, whose flickering light hurt Laura's inflamed eye, and this discomfort was the Bedouin's last greeting.

Just at that moment the door opened and her

name reached her from Hartwang's lips. The tender melody of his voice fell upon her ears like a greeting from childhood and home, and drew her to the faithful, never-changing friend. With a swift movement she tore the shade from her eyes and rushed into his arms. How safe she felt on that strong breast, how willingly she offered the sorely tried lover her lips to kiss, how her heart melted as, without a word of allusion to the bitter injustice which had been done him, he whispered in an agitated tone: "You poor, tortured darling! I certainly will never leave you again, and everything will now be right, everything."

"In a new life," cried Frau Helene, who had followed Hartwang. "The old one was consumed to ashes on yonder hearth. Only—you know my radical methods—there are still the works of the false apostle."

"Let the innocent volumes be spared," said Laura, smiling; "here"—she pointed to her bosom—"their contents were contradicted as the paper yonder blackened."

The young wife approached the newly united couple and, as she gazed into Laura's face, beaming with happiness and gratitude, her eyes grew

dim, and, yielding to a warm impulse of feeling, she pleaded: "I must go in a few minutes. You have regained Laura for a whole beautiful life, Herr Professor. Surely you will yield her a short time to her friend?"

She drew the girl toward her as she spoke, and Hartwang willingly moved aside; for he knew what the woman he loved owed to this sincere friend. While the two were whispering together, one of the Indian servants brought a telegram for Laura.

"May I open it?" asked the surgeon, and she answered cordially: "What is mine is yours."

"Then," he answered, after a hasty glance at the contents, "half the unwelcome news that we are owners of land on Mt. Lebanon falls to my share. 'Purchase just concluded. Congratulate you on the excellent bargain,' the German consul telegraphs you."

"And we will accept the congratulations," Laura answered. "Instead of the castle, we will build a spacious house near the spring in the grove of pines, and the European convalescents and sick children among them in Damascus, Beyrout, and, if there is room, in Jerusalem, too, shall find a home and restored health in the pure

air of the mountains. Do you approve of the plan?"

"Laura!" he cried rapturously, and instantly resumed the rights he had surrendered to her friend, but Laura rested her head upon his shoulder, and gazing tenderly into his face, continued: "And, you know, the house on Mt. Lebanon shall become only a branch of the children's hospital which, with your consent, is to be erected at home. You shall be the spirit brooding over the waters, but I should like to watch the house-keeping and the little patients myself as matron. I still desire to live out my own nature to the end, Peter, and, if the Eternal Love aids, I shall in this way succeed in benefiting others."

"I will answer for that," cried Frau Helene, and her prediction was fulfilled.

THE END.



